National Night Out Block Party Guide

A guide for residents working to improve their neighborhoods

Dear Oakland Resident,

An easy way to organize a neighborhood block party is to host one on National Night Out – held annually on the first Tuesday in August.

For generations, block parties have served as a way for neighbors to meet each other. Some block parties are organized around holidays such as the 4th of July or Labor Day. Others may start because of an issue affecting the neighborhood. Whatever the reason for the block party, they are fun and an easy way to build your neighborhoods spirit and unity.

You don't have to live in a neighborhood of single family homes to be involved in a block party. Block parties can happen everywhere – in townhouse complexes, apartment buildings, or even in a park near a condominium.

This guide is organized so that all the necessary information, forms, and "do's and don'ts" are in one place. So don't hesitate! Gather a couple of neighbors, pick a date, follow the instructions in the guide, and invite everyone to join in!

To register your NNO block party, contact Brenda Ivey in the Neighborhood Services Division. For more information at (510) 238-3091 or visit www2.oaklandnet.com/nno.

Sincerely,

Howard Jordan
Chief of Police

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About National Night Out

It's America's Night Out Against Crime!

National Night Out (NNO) is a unique event sponsored by the National Association of Town Watch and is held the first Tuesday in August.

Last year's National Night Out campaign involved citizens, law enforcement agencies, civic groups, businesses, neighborhood organizations and local officials from over 10,000 communities from all 50 states, U.S. territories, Canadian cities and military bases worldwide. In all, over 34 million people participated in NNO worldwide. Last year, 6,000 Oakland residents participated in NNO by attending 157 parties hosted by neighborhoods across the city.

National Night Out is designed to:

- Heighten crime and drug prevention awareness;
- Generate support for, and participation in, local anticrime programs, such as Neighborhood Watch
- Streghthen neighborhood spirit and police-community partnerships
- Send a message to criminals letting them know that neighborhoods are organized and fighting back

Along with the traditional disply of outdoor lights and front porch vigils, cities, towns and neighborhoods 'celebrate' NNO with a variety of events and activities such as:

- Block parties
- Cookouts,
- Visits from local police and sherriff departments
- Parades, exhibits
- Flashlight walks, contest, and youth programs

NNO has proven to be an effective, inexpensive and enjoyable program to promote neighborhood spirit and police-community partnerships. Plus the benefits our community will derive from NNO will most certainly extend well beyond the one night.

Adapted from www.nationalnightout.org

10 Reasons
To Have a Block Party

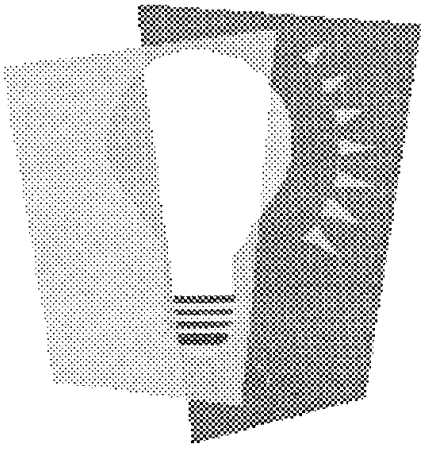
1. To have fun - no excuse is needed to celebrate!
2. To meet your neighbors. When you know who lives in your neighborhood, the more likely you are to identify strangers or suspicious people.
3. To increase the sense of belonging in your neighborhood.
4. To organize a Neighborhood Watch group (contact Brenda Ivey at 238-3091) or Citizens of Oakland Respond to Emergencies (CORE) group (contact Harriet Wright at 238-3947) to schedule your meetings.
5. To make additional connections within the community. When you know people, you can exchange skills or resources and perhaps organize a book club, baby-sitting co-op, share walking to school duties, or find new friends for your children.
6. To plan a campaign for traffic slowdown, get better lighting, or address other interests.
7. To "use" the street for one day, to, for example, roller blade, play hockey or play other games.
8. To meet some of the old time residents in the neighborhood and learn the neighborhood's history.
9. To have a neighborhood clean-up day, play some good music and barbecue once all of the work is done.
10. To start a yearly neighborhood tradition of getting together at least once a year!

How to Get Started

1. Gather a few neighbors and divide up the tasks. Decide on a possible theme, activities etc. Decide what to do about food.
2. Start knocking on doors to find out if there is enough interest and, if so, which day would be the best for the most people.
3. Pick a date and time (mid-afternoon to evening works best). Plan to end the event before 9:00pm in order to respect bedtime and neighborhood peace and quiet. Think of an alternate plan in case of poor weather.
4. Go door to door:
    - Hand out an invitation (use the one included in this guide, or create your own).
    - Ask people to fill out the Block Party details sheet and let them know where to return it (use the one included in this guide, or create your own).
    - Recruit volunteers.
5. Decide if this will be a block party restricted to those on the street/block or will people be able to invite friends/relatives (if yes, how many). Make this clear in your flyer/invitation.

Good Ideas

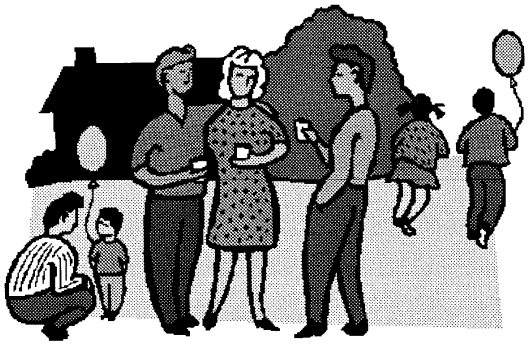
- Invite a City council member, school principal or city staff member to your block party.
- Make sure you have a sign-in sheet with the names of everyone who attends the party and everyone you contacted; after all, the idea of a block party is to connect neighbors.
- Identify special talents your neighbors might have - you may be living next to a magician, singer, dancer, artist, radio host or prize winning cook.
- Plan lots of activities for children.
- Include activities that encourage people to meet each other. Use nametags and include children by asking them to create the tags.
- Make sure that people with disabilities can participate in the activities and include their attendants (those with Seeing Eye dogs or in wheelchairs).
- Institute a bathroom policy "everyone to use their own" so that home security is maintained.
- Inspire clean up after the party by rewarding children with a prize for packing up garbage.
- Have a block/street clean up as part of the party.
- Distribute an evaluation form to participants (to get a good response, number the forms and have door prizes for returned entries).



REMINDERS

- Alcohol is only permitted on private property, not on city streets or in parks.
- Residents should observe security precautions, for example lock back doors to houses, and keep equipment in sight.
- In hot weather food spoils quickly: all perishables such as mayonnaise, salads or meats should be stored in coolers and be kept at the proper temperature.
- Food cannot be sold on city streets unless the proper permits have been obtained.
- Loud amplification of music is prohibited.
- Observe safety precautions for all activities, for example keep barbeques away from activities for children.
- Post signs the day before reminding everyone to remove cars and that the street will be closed.

YOU ARE INVITED TO



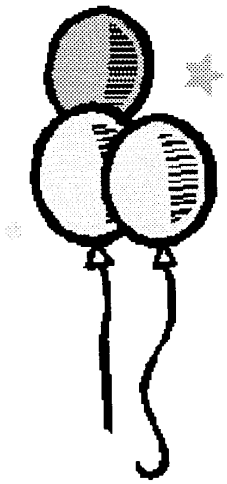
A BLOCK PARTY On National Night Out!

DATE: _____

TIME: _____

PLACE: _____

THEME/EVENT: _____

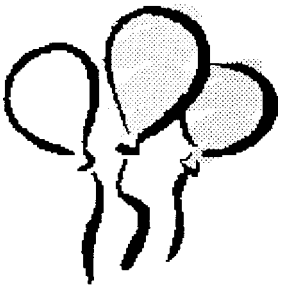


To RSVP, or to help out, please phone:

_____at _____, or

_____at _____

Block Party Details



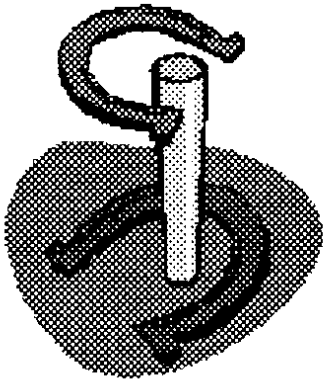
We are glad you can join us for National Night Out:

On _____ at _____
(date) (time)

We are asking each family to bring:

- chairs to sit on
- your own meats or vegetarian food to barbecue
- 1 salad and 1 desert to share (make enough for __ people)
- your own beverages or coffee and tea will be provided
- your own non-breakable plates, cups and cutlery
- other

In addition, do you have the following that could be used:



_____ A barbecue

_____ A table

_____ A cooler

Do you have a talent that you would like to share with us?

Suggestions for activities you could organize?

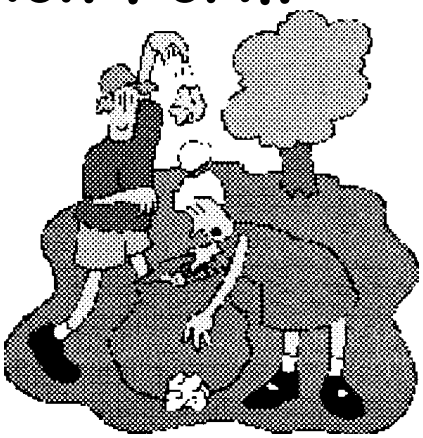
Please return this form by _____ (date) to:

Name _____ Phone_____

Address_____

National Night Out Evaluation Form

To help us plan future block parties,
your feedback is appreciated.



What were the 3 best things about this block party?

1._____
2. _____
3. _____

What 3 things would you change for next time?

1._____
2. _____
3. _____

How would you like the neighborhood connections gained at the block party to be maintained during the year?

1._____
2. _____
3. _____

Are you willing to help with the planning of future neighborhood events?
yes _____ no _____

if yes, please leave your name and phone number

with _____ at _____

Please leave this form at (address) at_____

Thank You

Suggested Activities for Getting to Know Your Neighbors

Neighborhood History

- Cultural Connections
    - Have everyone bring their favorite family dish.
    - Teach everyone how to say three things in another language.
    - Use a map to indicate where everyone originally came from.
- Record the story of how everyone came to live in the neighborhood and what he or she likes best about it.
- Identify any special people that lived in your area such as the longest resident, politician, artist, eccentric, hero, etc. Have partygoers guess who, what, where through charades and other games.
- Research your neighborhood's history at the Oakland Main Library's *Oakland History Room*.

Neighborhood Action

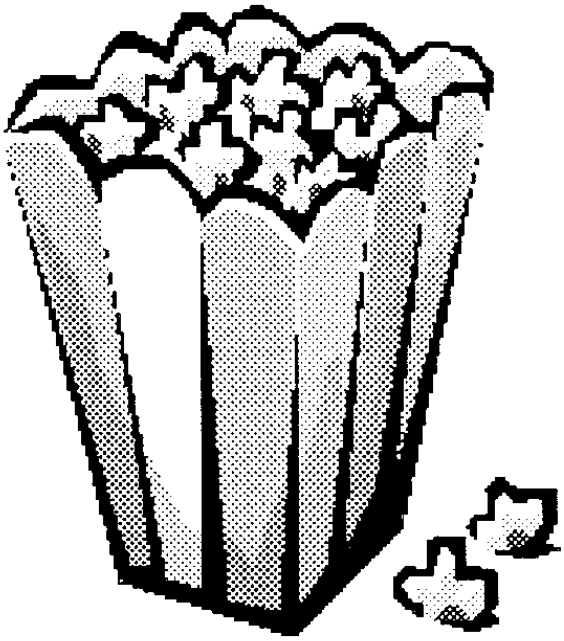
- Discuss what issues/concerns people have (keep this to a predetermined time: remember, a block party should be fun).
- Establish teams to explore how to resolve the concerns.
- Make plans to have a neighborhood clean-up.
- Build a bench, plant a garden, paint street numbers, or plant a tree as part of the block party activities.

Getting to know your "Non or Limited English Speaking" Neighbor

Many new citizens/neighbors want to meet their neighbors and make friends. It is important to make everyone feel at ease and to communicate clearly your intentions.

Here are some suggestions that may help new neighbors feel welcome:

- Use a translated description of what a block party is.
- If possible, knock on the door of a new neighbor with someone who speaks their language.
- Be specific about what the expectations are.
- Remember words like "barbecue", "face painting" or "potluck" may need to be explained.
- If you are blocking off the street for the day, explain about street parking changes.
- It may take more than one invitation for a new citizen/neighbor to fully understand what a block party is, so make a point of following up in the weeks leading up to the party.
- Make activities accessible to those with limited English language skills.
- Ask about special cultural/religious diet or activity constraints.
- Safety is a big concern for many new citizens because of past experiences or fear caused by not knowing the language.

Fun Family Activities For Block Parties

- Invite a clown, balloon artist, or magician
- Have games using water balloons
- Rent a "Jump House" but remember: it must not be placed on the street, so use a neighbor's yard
- Play hide and seek
- Do face painting (Remember to use non-toxic paint)
- Organize a kids talent show or parade
- Use sidewalk chalk (Make it a game for the kids and give out prizes)
- Play Pictionary© or charades
- "Name that Baby" (Have everyone bring a childhood photo and see who can guess who's who)
- Play Musical Chairs
- Rent a Popcorn or Snow Cone Machine