Greetings Neighbor:

Have you ever wanted to change something about your neighborhood, and felt you couldn’t because you are just one person?

Chances are that you’re not the only one in your neighborhood who has felt that way. That is why forming a tight-knit community is important; when people talk to each other they understand that they share the same concerns, and, more importantly, together they can do something to improve their neighborhood.

Block Parties can be the springboard for forming a strong neighborhood organization that solves problems by bringing neighbors together to tackle issues. Most importantly, block parties are a great way to celebrate all of the good things about your neighborhood. Therefore, the Neighborhood Resources Corporation is pleased to present this guide to hosting a successful block party. Enclosed, you will find general event planning tips, suggestions for sparking discussion on forming or strengthening your neighborhood organization, information on NRC’s Block Party Grant Program, and helpful forms.

On behalf of the NRC, I hope you have a fun, safe, and successful event!

Sincerely,

Naomi Penney
President, Neighborhood Resources Corporation

www.nrc4neighborhoods.org
Block Party Planning

Perhaps the most important word of advice that can be given about Block Parties is that they should not be planned by one individual. Successful Block Parties involve numerous people in planning the event, from children to senior citizens. Host a small Block Party planning committee meeting and delegate tasks according to each person’s strengths. Important considerations to make while planning your event include:

Location: While Block Parties do not have to be on the street, there are several advantages to doing so.

- Because a street is part of the public domain people feel more comfortable going out and meeting others there, and private front yards do not have the same sense of welcoming.
- Traffic will be blocked, ensuring safety for children.
- High visibility of the event will lead to more people coming out to join in the fun.
- The City can provide barricades to restrict street access.

In order to obtain permission for a street closure you will need to fill out an application to submit to the Board of Public Works at least four weeks prior to the event. On page five you can find a copy of the application to fill out and send to the BPW. Please know that the BPW, in some cases, may require that you provide a certificate of insurance listing the City as co-insured.

Timing: Mid-afternoon to evening works best on a weekend or holiday. Be respectful of people who may have to work early in the morning by ending the event before eight at night.

Weather: Come up with a contingency plan in case of rain, and, most importantly, plan around hot weather by picking a breezy and shady spot. Extreme heat can hurt attendance just as much as rain.

Neighborhood Outreach: The application for street closure requires that you notify your neighbors of your intent and gather signatures supporting the closure. Going door to door to gather signatures is a perfect time to kill two birds with one stone by also distributing invitations. You can find a sample invitation on page nine that you can use by filling in the blanks. This is also a perfect time to get more people involved in helping and planning the event, invite residents to come to another party planning committee meeting and drop off a form requesting that they bring certain items like food and chairs. You can find a sample of this form on page 10 that you can use. Don’t forget to invite neighborhood business owners and their employees.

Additional Invitations: Invite your Common Council representative and/or the Mayor to your event as this is a good way to build a meaningful relationship with city hall. On page 11 you can find a map of the Common Council districts to identify your neighborhoods’ representative. City employees that work in your neighborhood are also valuable guests; invite police officers, fire fighters, code enforcement officers, and neighborhood planners.

Activities: Keep young children busy! Involve older kids in the Block Party by having them organize and supervise events like chalk drawing on sidewalks or finger painting for younger children. For adults, games and activities should be used during the early stages of the Block
Party or during down-times to encourage people to stay. Team-oriented games that require people to meet and communicate help break the ice.

**Food:** Having food at the Block Party is probably the most essential element of a successful event. There are many different options you could use to provide food. Here are some ideas:

- Organize a Pot Luck, have households bring food from different categories. Don’t forget to include plates, utensils, and napkins as a category.
- Have a chili or barbeque cook-off contest.
- Get a neighborhood restaurant or grocery store to sponsor the event by donating food. Be sure to return the favor by letting guests know what they did.

**Clean-Up Crew:** Don’t forget to establish who will be responsible for cleaning up after the event. Involve children in this by giving a prize to whoever fills up a trash bag first.

**Addressing Neighborhood Issues**

It is important to remember that a Block Party is not a proper place to engage in a lengthy neighborhood meeting on any particular neighborhood issue. A Block Party is a way for neighbors to meet one and another, and form the social connections that are required for a successful neighborhood organization.

If your neighborhood already has an organization or group, make information on it available at a table and invite residents to attend meetings. If you do not have a neighborhood organization and want to start one, here are some ideas on using the Block Party as a catalyst to do so:

- Have sign-in sheets to create a neighborhood mailing list. See page 12 for a template.
- At a predetermined time host a short discussion on neighborhood issues, and suggest a time for a formal meeting.
- Have a table or area set up where residents can write down their concerns and possible ways to address their issues. Consider doing this on a large poster size sheet of paper where everyone can view each others’ comments easily, as this can be a good conversation starter.

**NRC’s Block Party Grant Program**

Because the NRC recognizes Block Parties’ potential in building strong neighborhoods, we are proud to offer the Block Party Grant Program to neighborhoods in South Bend, IN. Each proposal is reviewed for its anticipated impact, and funding is awarded accordingly. Typically, block parties receive $200.00 to go towards purchasing food, party favors, and supplies.
• The Board of Public Works must have four (4) weeks prior notice before event occurs.

• All residents within the affected area must be notified of this event.

• Event end times are pursuant to the recommendations of the South Bend Police Department.

• No block party shall end later than 8:00 p.m.

• Please complete entire application before submitting.

• The purpose of the block party is required.

• A street can be blocked off from intersection to intersection only. No half blocks or alleys can be blocked off.

• The person submitting the application must comply with numbers 7-14 in the application.

• The Board of Public Works reserves the right to deny any block party application based on information gathered from the South Bend Police Department or other sources.

• The City of South Bend Noise Ordinance is in effect at all hours. Between the hours of 11:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m. certain noises are particularly prohibited. These include operating radio receiving sets, musical instruments, phonographs and other sound reproduction devices if audible fifty (50) feet away, as well as shouting, yelling, hooting, whistling, or singing in the streets in a manner to disturb the peace (Municipal Code 13-57).

• Notification of approval/denial of this request will be issued by return of the application form upon signed authorization by the Board of Public Works.

The city application is available at the NRC website, http://www.nrc4neighborhoods.org/resources/block-party-application/

If you have questions, contact the Board of Public Works:
227 West Jefferson
1316 County City Building
South Bend, Indiana 46601
(574) 2359251
Fax: (574) 2359171
Email: publicwks@southbendin.gov
You Are Invited To A:

BLOCK PARTY

Date: ____________________.

Time: ____________________.

Place: ____________________.

To RSVP, Or To Help Out, Call/E-Mail

_________________________ At
_________________________

Or
_________________________ At
_________________________
We’re Happy You Can Join Us!

At __________________________

On __________________________

For the Block Party!

We are asking each family to bring:
• chairs to sit on
• your own meats or vegetarian food to barbecue
• a desert to share (make enough for ___ people)
• beverages
• your own non-breakable plates, cups and cutlery

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__________________________________________
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Block Party Grant Pre-Application

Date:

Applicant’s Name:

Address:

Neighborhood:

Phone:

Email:

Briefly describe the activity, event, date, location and the item(s) you would like to have funded:

If you have any questions regarding this pre-application or the program guidelines, please call Diana at 287.0425. You may e-mail it to nrcneighbors@gmail.com or send it to:

Neighborhood Resources Corporation
P.O. Box 1693
South Bend, IN 46634-1693