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## 2014 NEIGHBORHOOD BLOCK PARTY – 10 TIPS

One of the best ways to get to know your neighbors is by hosting a neighborhood Block Party, picnic, or BBQ. There are many creative ways to plan your event and City of Bellevue’s Neighborhood Outreach team is happy to help with ideas and resources. The key to a successful party is just a little organization and advance planning. Block Parties help neighbors get to know each other and lead to more connected, safer and healthier neighborhoods.

For an easy and successful Block Party try these 10 tips:

1. **Choose a date:** at least four – six weeks in advance. Most block parties are held in the summer when kids are out of school. Many parties are held on weekends, but often weeknights have fewer conflicts. Holidays such as July 4, Memorial Day and Labor Day are also popular for Block Parties. Be sure to check if any other neighborhood events may be going on, such as neighborhood swim meets. Usually a two hour window of time is sufficient for a block party. If you will have organized games or activities, you may want a little longer time span.
2. **Define your neighborhood:** A neighborhood can be single-family homes, apartments or condos or a combination of all of the above. Some neighborhoods are easily defined by geographic boundaries. If yours is not, pick an area that makes sense to you – it may be a block, several blocks or an even larger area. Neighborhoods are defined by the people who live there. Your outreach can be as small or as broad as you wish.
3. **Choose a location:** Block parties can be held in a neighbor’s driveway or at the end of a street or cul-de-sac that does not affect traffic. You can also hold your party in a neighborhood park. [http://www.bellevuewa.gov/rental\\_facilities.htm](http://www.bellevuewa.gov/rental_facilities.htm)  
If you want to block off a street for your party, you will need a right-of-way permit from the City. Contact Neighborhood Outreach where we will help walk you through the

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permitting process. Additionally in 2014, those neighborhoods who register their party through Neighbor Link and request a road closure, will be reimbursed with proper documentation, up to \$50 for rental of approved Type III barricades with Road Closed sign.

4. **Publicity:** A colorful flyer distributed around the neighborhood gets the word out. Remember to include an RSVP with contact name and phone or email and a way to sign up to bring things or to help with planning. Door-to-door distribution can be accomplished by a few volunteers. For a larger neighborhood, high school kids or boy scouts may be able to help deliver flyers. If you have an email list, send electronic versions of your flyer as well. Sandwich board signs or posters at key neighborhood locations can help get the word out too.

For parties scheduled June- October 4, the City can design and print up to 500 flyers and a banner or sandwich board signage for your party. Contact Carol Ross, ([cross@bellevuewa.gov](mailto:cross@bellevuewa.gov)) at least three weeks prior to the date you need your flyers.

5. **Food and Beverage:** Most parties are potluck. If your neighborhood has an association, often it will supply hotdogs or burgers to BBQ and/or paper and plastic products and drinks. Many neighborhoods do this and ask residents to bring a dish to share. For a large neighborhood, you may not need any more organization than this. Often in a smaller neighborhood, families are assigned a category of food, alphabetically by last name. For example, those with names A-F bring an appetizer, G-M bring a salad or side, and N-Z bring dessert. Some neighborhoods ask for a small donation to cover the cost of the main dish and collect money in advance. Be sure to arrange for a few people to bring BBQ grills and a few tables to serve food. Recruiting a clean-up crew is also a good idea.

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6. **Things to Bring:** In addition to food, lawn chairs and picnic blankets are great. If your street is safe for bikes, scooters, skates, etc., this can be fun for the kids. Name tags can be helpful in larger neighborhoods.
7. **Police/Fire:** Bellevue Police or Fire can sometimes send a police car/fire truck and uniformed officers. This provides a fun attraction for kids and good safety information for everyone. Contact Lt. Lisa Patricelli with Police at [lpatricelli@bellevuewa.gov](mailto:lpatricelli@bellevuewa.gov) and Lt. Richard Burke, [rburke@bellevuewa.gov](mailto:rburke@bellevuewa.gov) for Fire.
8. **Community Service:** A Block Party is a great opportunity for your neighborhood to give back to the community. Many neighborhoods hold a food drive during their block party and collect non-perishable food for those less fortunate in our community. Food can be donated to Hopelink [http://www.hope-link.org/take\\_action/end\\_summer\\_hunger/](http://www.hope-link.org/take_action/end_summer_hunger/) at 148<sup>th</sup> & Main in Bellevue or the charity of your choice. Please remember to get a receipt so we can recognize your contribution!
9. **Activities:** Planned activities can include games like tug of war, balloon toss, three-legged races, etc. Plan activities for all ages. Affordable game rentals are available at: [http://www.bellevuewa.gov/facility\\_rentals\\_outdoor.htm](http://www.bellevuewa.gov/facility_rentals_outdoor.htm)
10. **Neighbor Information:** At your block party, be sure to collect everyone's contact information, so you can use it for future neighborhood gatherings or to disseminate information about neighborhood issues. You may also decide to do a neighborhood directory to enhance communication for the future.

**Most important – have fun and enjoy your block party!**



# Suggested Activities for Getting to Know Your Neighbors

## 4<sup>th</sup> of July

- Who can trace their family origins back the farthest.
- Who is the newest “American.”?
- Play charades using American heroes.
- Include a cake decorated with the American Flag.
- Play patriotic music.

## Neighborhood History

- Research through the library, and the museum of local history of your neighborhood.
- 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.

## Cultural Connections

- Have everyone bring his or her 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.



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## Getting Your “New American” Neighbor to the Block Party

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 the 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.