

November 2023

Sydenham District Association
Template for Organizing a Block Party/ Street Festival

A core purpose for the Sydenham District Association is to maintain and enhance the quality of our community, the built heritage and our environment. Block parties/street festivals is a way for neighbours to celebrate and promote the quality of living in a local neighbourhood. The SDA has developed this template to be a step-by-step guide for neighbourhood volunteers who are interested in planning and organizing a block party/street festival. This template is based on what other communities, as well as various neighbourhoods in Kingston are doing to organize events that make a difference to quality of life in the community.

The template also provides contact information for obtaining necessary approvals from the City of Kingston where there may be temporary street closures and liability coverage required. The City of Kingston is currently preparing a Process Map to make it easier to work through all the requirements for obtaining approval to hold a block party/street festival on City property or for a temporary street closure. You are advised to check the City of Kingston website for the latest update.

What sort of event to hold may be different from neighbourhood to neighbourhood- however the planning, organizing and delivery of such events have commonalities that are covered in this template.

Why Have a Block Party/Street Festival

A block party/ street festival is about demonstrating that we have an engaged, welcoming and inclusive area to live by:

1. Getting to know others in your neighbourhood and where they live improves community spirit & safety
2. Encouraging neighbours to look after the neighbourhood
3. Promoting a sense of belonging.
4. Welcoming new neighbours and getting to know each other better. In certain neighbourhoods a reach out to students living in the area demonstrates what it means to be good neighbours.
5. To have fun- and look to celebrate the good things about living where you are.

What type of block party will work best for your neighbourhood?

Whatever you decide, it is best to focus on keeping it simple and affordable. Also, best to use the natural neighbourhood boundaries where possible so who to invite is clear. Decide early and make it clear that the event is for those on the street/ block. Also decide whether people can invite friends and relatives who do not live in the area so that you can estimate numbers of people who may participate. There are many ways to hold the event:

1. Barbecues- organizers purchase all that is needed, and neighbours provide the money- everyone brings his or her own food to grill.
2. Picnics- everyone brings their own meal
3. Potluck – everyone brings one dish
4. Catered- everyone shares the cost and food is purchased
5. Maybe some combination of above

Step by Step for a Successful Block Party/Street Festival:

Form a Volunteer Organizing Committee:

The first step is to reach out to neighbours who are interested in planning a block party/street festival and establish an Organizing Committee. Look to have a diverse set of skills on the Committee to handle various elements for a successful event. Try to include longer term neighbours and newer neighbours.

Three- four months prior to the date:

- Hold a planning meeting.
- Decide who will be the main contact person, responsible for sending out invitations and keeping track of how many people may show up for the event.
- Assign responsibilities to committee members:
 - o publicity
 - o finances
 - o food and refreshments
 - o activities and entertainment
 - o permit applications, insurance and other legal requirements
 - o clean-up

- Survey the neighbourhood to select the date for the party and ask what kind of event would be of interest.
- Plan your finances.
 - Set a budget for the event.
 - How do you plan to finance the event?
 - Do you want to set up a bank account?
 - Decide if you will seek sponsorships or donations for food, dishes, drinks and activities.
 - On the day of the event, you may want to set up a donations table for participants to contribute to the cost of running the event.

Apply for permits/approvals you will need to host the event.

If you intend to hold the event in a City park or require a temporary street closure you will require a permit from the City of Kingston, show proof of liability insurance for the event and pay certain fees for permits, traffic barricades etc. For a temporary street closure, you will have to indicate that there is support from neighbours. Specific information is in the Block Party Process Map on the City of Kingston website. Note the timeline required for obtaining approval from the City for the block party/ street festival.

If the block party is going to be held on a City owned property/ park here is the contact information on the City's website for obtaining approval:

<https://www.cityofkingston.ca/documents/10180/20847/Special%20Events%20Policy#:~:text=Special%20Events%20Permit%20is%20issued,per%20year%2C%20per%20Event%20Applicant.>

If the block party/street festival requires a temporary street closure you will have to apply for a Temporary Right of Way Occupancy Permit. As part of the application, you will need to provide a Traffic Control Plan and arrange to rent barricades for the road closure. There is contact information for traffic barricade suppliers in the City's Process Map.

The City of Kingston requires that a special event on City property /park or one that requires a temporary street closure MUST have liability insurance for the event. The specific amount of liability insurance as noted in the application form says "the holder must be prepared to obtain and maintain a certificate of Commercial General Liability, Automobile Liability insurance and any other required coverage depending on the nature of the event to the satisfaction of Legal Services in an amount no less than five million dollars (\$5,000,000). The Commercial General Liability coverage must indicate that the City of Kingston has been added as an additional insured on the policy. Evidence of this insurance must be provided to the Coordinator with the Special Events "

Also review the city's Noise By-Law to make sure your event adheres to it.

Decide how food/water/beverages will be handled.

Will the Committee:

- buy food and drinks and charge guests a flat fee?
- plan a menu and assign dishes to each household?
- ask everyone to bring a main course and a side dish to share
- be clear about neighbours bringing their own water/beverages and that the organizers are not serving alcoholic beverages
- think about how to make the event as “green” as possible

Think about the demographics of your neighbourhood and the mix of participants who may come to the block party/street festival.

- If you have a number of young families and children, you may have to organize an area for kids to have games and to do it safely. Also, in your communications on the event note that parents will be asked to supervise the games/play area.
- If you have a number of students renting in the area, how do you have an inclusive event so that students feel welcome to come to this neighbourhood event. You might consider having a student to sit on your Planning Committee.
- If you have a number of new neighbours, how do you propose to encourage them to participate in the event.

Six Weeks to One Month Before

- Send out invitations by email or letter drop (ask people to bring their own chairs/dishes and drinking water). This is an opportunity to emphasize that the event will be as “GREEN” as possible in keeping with the City’s commitment to sustainability and the neighbourhood environment.
- Arrange for barricades to block off the street(s) around the party- the City of Kingston has specific requirements for barricades and signage.
- Ensure you have purchased the required liability insurance to cover the event.
- If necessary- Book portable toilet facilities.
- Reserve equipment you may need to rent (tables, tents, sound system, etc.).

Two Weeks Before

- Publicize the event. This can be signs posted throughout the neighbourhood, letter box drops, ads in local newspapers.

- Confirm that all arrangements have been made with emergency, police and fire departments.
- Confirm arrangements for barricades, entertainment, food, refreshments, tents, tables and any other equipment that will be rented or borrowed.
- Confirm that sufficient neighbours have volunteered for handling food at the event.
- Confirm that sufficient neighbours have agreed to bring recycling bins to aid in clean up after the event and that there is a clean-up group ready to go at the end of the event.

After the Event

- Join forces with your neighbours to clean up. Ideally this is done immediately after the event. Be sure that road barricades and signage have been taken down and stored for pick up.
- Send thank-you to sponsors, donors and anyone else who helped make the event a success.
- Meet to evaluate the event's success and things that might be improved.
- Set a date for next year's party