# BUILDING BLOCKS
## How Cities Can Encourage Block Parties

# Contents

# About the author

Adam Greenfield is a community organizer and open streets advocate who works with communities and cities to transform streets from movement-oriented thoroughfares into social spaces. As founder of the *Streets For All* block party support project and the *Inner Sunset Sundays* event series, his work has resulted in over 50 community-organized block parties, street fairs, and flea markets.

Adam has also led and contributed to many other projects to create public space and build community. His writing on community and urban design can be found on Streetsblog, Strong Towns, and PlazaPerspective.com.

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*Report updated May 28th, 2017.*

"The block party has made our street more of a community." - *Gitta Salomon, neighbor*

# INTRODUCTION

It's a warm Saturday afternoon and something special is taking place on a nearby street. With a permit from the city, neighbors have blocked off through-traffic for their first block party. As pleasant scents waft out from the barbecue grill, children run freely and neighbors meet for the first time. "It's life-changing", says one resident.

Healthy societies depend on face to face contact. Relationships between neighbors are essential for creating the trust and exchange of ideas that keep people and societies resilient. Research shows that people who are connected to their community live longer, sleep better, and are happier[1].

As political scientist Robert Putnam has famously documented[2], all forms of association between Americans have been declining for years. Older residents often report that neighbors used to know each other and are more likely to be strangers today. A whole host of factors - including auto-centric urban design, longer working hours, addictive technology, and more frequent changes of address - have contributed to this isolation. Today, it's considered normal that neighbors are strangers.

"Cities can help foster more block parties by making the permit paperwork as simple as possible."

*Emma Smith, block party organizer*

Block parties are an essential and powerful tool for stitching back together an increasingly isolated society. By transforming their street into a one-day social space neighbors take the first step to more connected lives. Following a block party, residents often begin to alert each other about crime on the street, babysit each others' children, lend one another tools, provide support in times of crisis, and so on. More cities now see block parties as a low-cost preventative solution to

"When we dropped the block party permit fee, applications immediately spiked."

*Seth Geiser, Program & Policy Specialist, Seattle Department of Transportation*

crime, financial stress, psychological illness, and many other quality of life issues.

## CITIES HAVE TREMENDOUS POWER TO ENCOURAGE OR INHIBIT BLOCK PARTIES

Policies and regulations can make or break a city's potential as fertile ground for block parties. As will be explored below, numerous cities interviewed for this report experienced noticeable rises or falls in block party permit application numbers following changes that had made their application processes less or more burdensome. This aligns with the author's experience as founder of the *Streets For All* block party support project where neighbors repeatedly stressed the importance of a simple, accessible, and affordable block party permit process.

Combining interviews with city staff, data compiled from permitting processes from 62 US cities, and the author's own experience in guiding communities through block party planning this report identifies best practices to help cities encourage their residents to organize block parties.

If cities improve their block party programs there will be more block parties. But most importantly, communities will be happier, safer, and more resilient.

1      Montgomery, Charles. (2013). *Happy City: Transforming Our Lives Through Urban Design* (p.54). Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
2      Putnam, Robert D. (2000). *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community.* New York: Simon & Schuster.

# STUDY METHODOLOGY

This study, conducted in 2016, looked at all 62 US cities[1] with populations of over 300,000. Starting with a review of all cities' permitting processes, as found online, phone interviews were then conducted with 31 of these cities with a staff member in the department that stewards each city's block party program. From this data, combined with the author's own experience in guiding communities through block party organizing, a list of best practices and recommendations emerged.

*Note: References in this report to "events", "organizers", "processes", "fees", and "applications" are in the context of block parties.*

## COMMON FEATURES OF PERMIT APPLICATION PROCESSES

This report considers the below elements to be the most important quantifiable factors in a permit application. See the *Summary of Data* section for more information.

- Permit application fee
- Application form length
- Whether form is block party-specific or for all street events
- Application submission options
- Barricade requirements
- Required support from neighbors
- Rain date
- Days notice required
- Event curfew time

1        A 63rd city of over 300,000, Austin, TX, was not included in this study because, as of writing, the city has not yet rolled out its block party program.

## CITIES SURVEYED (INTERVIEWED IN BOLD)

**Albuquerque, NM**
**Anaheim, CA**
**Anchorage, AK**
Arlington, VA
**Atlanta, GA**
Aurora, CO
Baltimore, MD
Boston, MA
**Charlotte, NC**
**Chicago, IL**
Cleveland, OH
Colorado Springs, CO
Columbus, OH
**Corpus Christi, TX**
**Dallas, TX**
**Denver, CO**
Detroit, MI
El Paso, TX
**Fort Worth, TX**
Fresno, CA
Honolulu, HI
**Houston, TX**
**Indianapolis, IN**
Jacksonville, FL
Kansas City, MO
Las Vegas, NV
**Lexington, KY**
**Long Beach, CA**
**Los Angeles, CA**
Louisville, KY
Memphis, TN

Mesa, AK
**Miami, FL**
**Milwaukee, WI**
Minneapolis, MN
Nashville, TN
**New Orleans, LA**
New York City, NY
Oakland, CA
Oklahoma City, OK
**Omaha, NE**
Philadelphia, PA
**Phoenix, AZ**
**Pittsburgh, PA**
Portland, OR
**Raleigh, NC**
**Riverside, CA**
**Sacramento, CA**
**San Antonio, TX**
San Diego, CA
San Francisco, CA
**San Jose, CA**
**Santa Ana, CA**
**Seattle, WA**
**St Louis, MO**
Stockton, CA
Tampa, FL
**Tucson, AZ**
Tulsa, OK
**Virginia Beach, VA**
Washington, DC
Wichita, KS



"Because of the block party, my daughter now babysits for two of our neighbors and I've hired a neighbor to help with home projects and yard work." - *Jason Mitchell, neighbor*
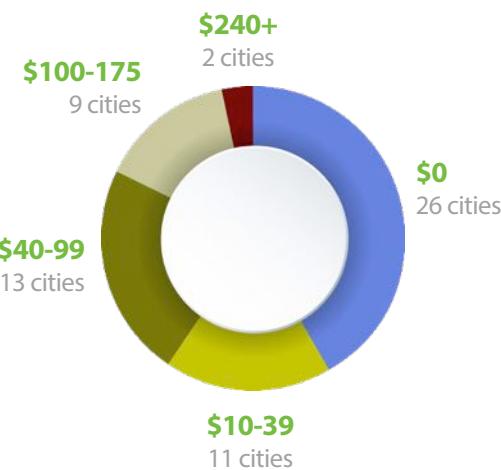
"I cherished hearing stories about our block from our most senior residents." - *Patricia Oliveira, neighbor*
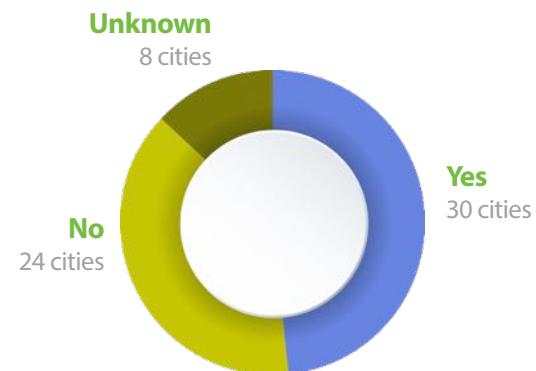
# SUMMARY OF DATA

## BLOCK PARTY APPLICATION FEE

How much a resident pays to apply for a block party permit. The lower the fee the more people apply.



$240+
2 cities

$100-175
9 cities

$0
26 cities

$40-99
13 cities

$10-39
11 cities

## APPLICATION FORM LENGTH

The shorter the form the more inviting the process. Printable forms can be quantified in terms of length; online-only forms' (required by 15 cities) lengths cannot easily be measured but are subjectively labeled as short, medium, or long in the *Appendix* section.



Unknown / n/a
8 cities

1 page
9 cities

Online
15 cities

2-5 pages
16 cities

22+ pages
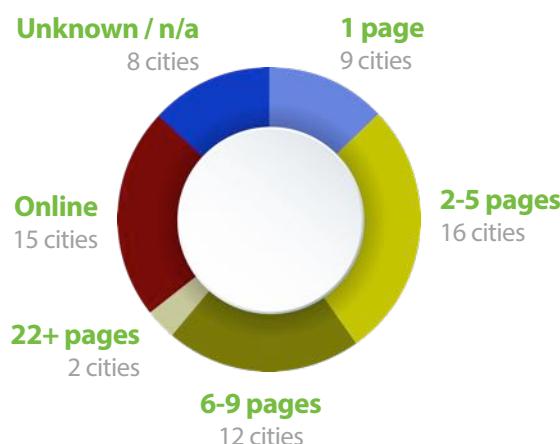2 cities

6-9 pages
12 cities

## IS THE FORM ONLY FOR BLOCK PARTIES?

Is the permit application form only for block parties or for all special events such as parades and street fairs? Block party-only forms tend to be shorter and simpler.



Unknown
8 cities

Yes
30 cities

No
24 cities

## APPLICATION SUBMISSION OPTIONS

Most cities allow completed application forms to be submitted in just one way, such as via mail. Some cities allow 2 or more submission options, making the process more user-friendly.



Unknown
3 cities

Email
5 cities

2+ methods
16 cities

Online
11 cities

In person
4 cities

Phone
2 cities

Mail
21 cities
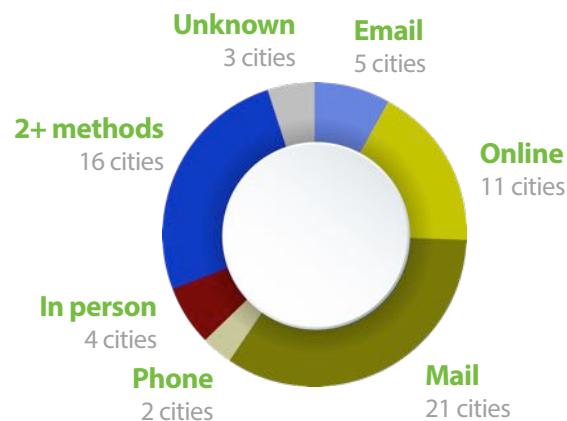
## BARRICADES

Residents must block off traffic using some kind of barricade. Most cities require use of standardized Type I, II, or III barricades as described in the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). If rented, barricades can be one of a block party's largest costs. 4 cities allow any kind of barricade, such as saw horses or trash bins.

**Unknown / TBD**
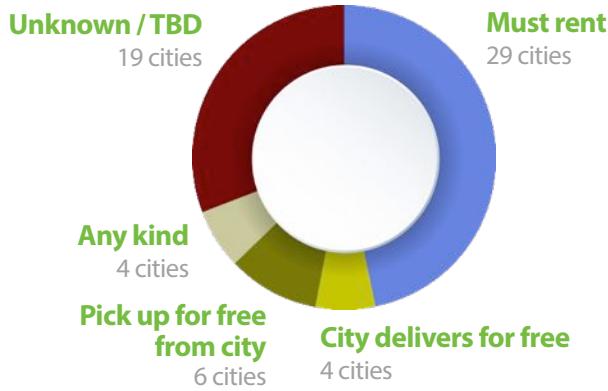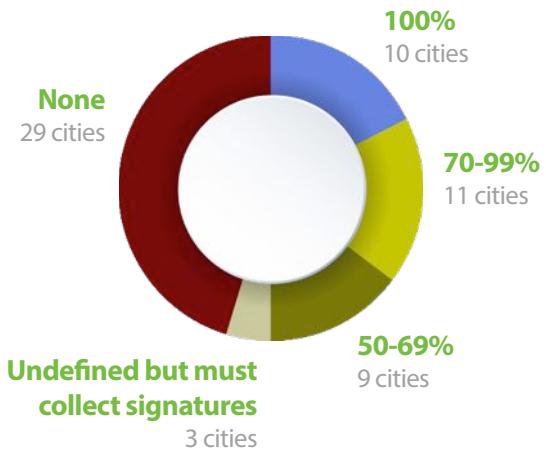19 cities

**Must rent**
29 cities

**Any kind**
4 cities

**Pick up for free from city**
6 cities

**City delivers for free**
4 cities

## REQUIRED SUPPORT FROM NEIGHBORS

Many cities require applicants to submit petitions of signatures proving that their neighbors know about and support the block party. Requirements can be as high as 100% of neighbors.

**100%**
10 cities

**None**
29 cities

**70-99%**
11 cities

**50-69%**
9 cities

**Undefined but must collect signatures**
3 cities

## IS A RAIN DATE ALLOWED?

A minority of cities allow applicants to specify a back up date to which a block party can be moved in the event of adverse weather.

**Unknown**
4 cities

**Yes**
8 cities

**No**
50 cities
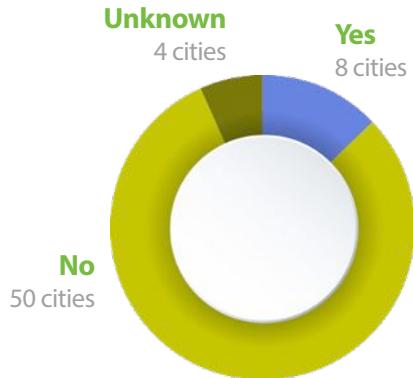
## DAYS NOTICE REQUIRED

This is the number of days before the event that an application must be submitted. The shorter the notice the easier it is for organizers.

**90-120 days**
4 cities

**35-60 days**
7 cities

**3-7 days**
11 cities

**8-14 days**
19 cities

**15-30 days**
21 cities
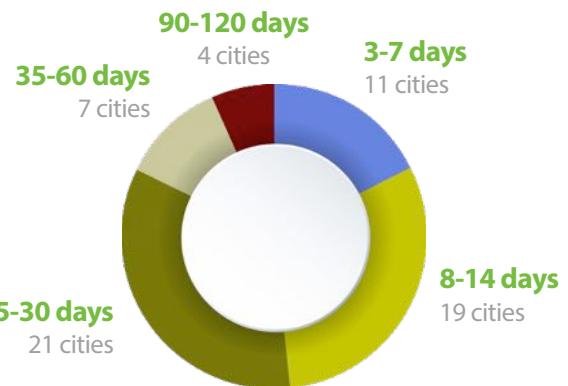
## EVENT CURFEW

Events in some cities must end by a particular time. Events with late or no end time offer organizers more flexibility.
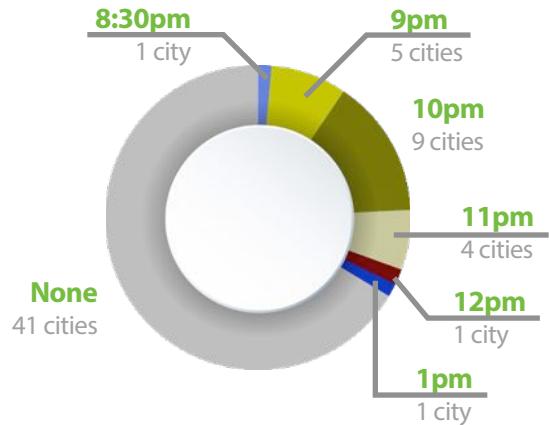
**8:30pm**
1 city

**9pm**
5 cities

**10pm**
9 cities

**11pm**
4 cities

**12pm**
1 city

**1pm**
1 city

**None**
41 cities

"Planning the event helped me get to know my neighbors before the block party itself." - *Katelyn Kimmons, neighbor*

# SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

## PART 1: OVERALL FEATURES OF PERMITTING BLOCK PARTIES

### A. IDENTIFYING A BLOCK PARTY PROGRAM'S GOALS

1. Identify a block party program's goals and ensure its underlying values and rules, requirements, and application process are aligned with those goals.
2. Ensure the block party program trusts residents to do the right thing, considers block parties a social benefit, and encourages neighbors to organize block parties.

### B. FINDING AND COMPLETING APPLICATIONS

Create an application process with the following features:

1. All content is written in a friendly tone, suitable for people of limited reading and comprehension abilities.
2. Applications are available in non-English languages.
3. Written materials encourage and congratulate people for wanting to organize a block party.
4. Forms prominently feature the term "block party".
5. The application form is easy to find.
6. The distinction between a block party and a larger special event is explained.
7. The number and complexity of rules is minimized.
8. Only one form must be completed.
9. No online account must be created.
10. The application process is the same for all city districts.

### C. ENCOURAGING BLOCK PARTIES

1. Provide a written organizing guide and in-person support.
2. Promote the opportunity to organize a block party.
3. Monitor when and where block parties take place and increase outreach to areas that organize fewer events.

### D. FREQUENCY OF BLOCK PARTIES

1. Allow and encourage residents to organize block parties more than once a year.
2. Create a "Play Streets" permit where streets can be closed weekly or even daily for children's play.

### E. REDUCING REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

1. Create a pilot program where certain regulatory requirements are relaxed for a defined period of time. If successful, make these changes permanent.
2. State required expenses upfront, rather than determining them after application.

### F. PERMITTING PROCESSES

Keep internal processing simple. Consider piloting simpler processes before long term implementation.

## PART 2: COMMON REGULATIONS IN BLOCK PARTY PROGRAMS

### A. PERMIT APPLICATION FEE

Make permit applications free. Cover processing costs by drawing funds from fee revenues from larger events.

### B. APPLICATION FORM

1. Make the application form as short as possible, no more than one page.
2. Create an application form just for block parties, keep special events on a separate form.

### C. APPLICATION FORM SUBMISSION METHODS

1. Allow people to apply through a short online form, as well as via mail, email, phone, fax, and in-person.
2. If payment is required, allow online credit card payments in addition to checks.

### D. RAIN DATES

Allow applicants to specify a rain date on the application form.

### E. BARRICADE REQUIREMENTS

1. Allow applicants to use their own barricades, such as saw horses and trash bins. Encourage, but don't require, them to post large signs labeled "Block party" on these barricades.
2. If applicants must use standardized barricades, create a city-owned barricade supply that can be loaned out for free.

### F. REQUIRED SIGNED SUPPORT FROM RESIDENTS

Don't require applicants to collect signatures of support. Instead, suggest applicants speak with their neighbors and leave a flyer if someone cannot be reached.

### G. DAYS NOTICE REQUIRED

Require as few days notice as possible for a block party application, preferably 2 weeks or less.

### H. EVENT CURFEW

Relax curfews to at least 11pm or eliminate them completely.

"A city should have a small marketing program to advertise the benefits of block parties and provide an FAQ on how to put one together. Social media could assist in this effort." - *Patricia Oliveira, neighbor*

# Main report

## PART 1: OVERALL FEATURES OF PERMITTING BLOCK PARTIES

### A. IDENTIFYING A BLOCK PARTY PROGRAM'S GOALS

The first and most important consideration behind a block party permitting program is to identify the program's goals and to what extent its rules, requirements, and application process are aligned with those goals.

To encourage events, a block party program's underlying values are crucial. As evidenced in this report, cities vary in the extent to which they encourage block parties. Most cities appear neutral in their support, providing instructions written in an administrative tone and an application process with a sizable number of regulations. Some cities are more cautious, requiring, for instance, traffic control plans and 100% of residents to sign in support.

> "The annual number has climbed because we make it easy to organize block parties."
>
> *Mike Gaughen, Engineering Technician, Public Works Department, Omaha*

Cities that encourage block parties implicitly integrate into their programs a common set of values:

1. Block parties have significant benefits and should not just be allowed but encouraged.
2. Applicants are presumed trustworthy; they have an incentive to make their event successful and to reach out to and get along with neighbors.
3. Block parties have a minor impact on residents, for whom driving access to their homes is still possible during an event. Therefore, a small number of neighbors should not be able to block a block party application.

**Recommendations:**

1. **Identify a block party program's goals and ensure its underlying values and rules, requirements, and application process are aligned with those goals.**
2. **Ensure the block party program trusts residents to do the right thing, considers block parties a social benefit, and encourages neighbors to organize block parties.**

### B. FINDING AND COMPLETING APPLICATIONS

Few cities have an inviting application process. For people new to block party organizing, unfamiliar with permit applications, or with limited reading and comprehension abilities, many cities' processes are prohibitive.

Off-putting features common in applications include:

1. Web pages and forms' written and visual style is dry, bureaucratic, and uninviting.
2. Applications are only available in English.
3. Applicants are expected to know that they must search for a special events permit instead of a block party permit.
4. The application form is difficult to find.
5. The application form is long and confusing.
6. The mention of "block party" is buried deep in the application form.
7. There is no definition of a block party and the difference between a block party and a larger street event[1].
8. Multiple documents must be read.

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1         Several cities mentioned this as an occasional source of confusion for applicants.

9. Several permits, each with a separate cost, must be applied for[2].
10. Applicants must create an online account to apply.
11. Application requirements differ between city districts.

**Recommendation: Create an application process with the following features:**

1. **Content is written in a friendly tone, suitable for people of limited reading and comprehension abilities.**
2. **Applications are available in languages other than English.**
3. **Written materials encourage and congratulate people for wanting to organize a block party.**
4. **Application forms prominently feature the term "block party".**
5. **The application form is easy to find.**
6. **The distinction between a block party and a larger special event is explained.**
7. **The number and complexity of rules is minimized.**
8. **Only one form must be completed.**
9. **No online account must be created.**
10. **The application process is the same for all city districts.**

## C. ENCOURAGING BLOCK PARTIES

Few cities provide information on how to organize block parties. However, residents are more likely to hold an event if provided with such support, which should come in the form of both a friendly, clearly written guide and in-person advice on how to:

1. Contact neighbors.
2. Organize productive and inclusive meetings.
3. Create communication networks.
4. Identify and assign roles.
5. Assess support for a block party and address concerns.
6. Brainstorm event ideas.

2       For example, Oakland requires a Special Events Permit and an Encroachment Permit.

7. Plan an event's features.
8. Manage finances.

Cities usually spend little or no resources on promoting block parties and many residents never discover this opportunity. The exception is some police departments like Indianapolis's that promote block parties as part of National Night Out. Cities could spread awareness about block parties through newspapers, television news reports, public events, municipal websites, social media, local organizations, door-to-door visits, and so on.

As part of these efforts, cities should keep records on when and where block parties take place. Few of the cities interviewed keep track of this information, which would be useful for monitoring the efficacy of measures to encourage block parties and would help identify areas, such as low income and non-English-speaking communities, where more targeted outreach is necessary.

**Recommendations:**

1. **Provide a written organizing guide and in-person support.**
2. **Promote the opportunity to organize a block party.**
3. **Keep track of when and where block parties take place and increase outreach to areas that organize fewer events.**

## D. FREQUENCY OF BLOCK PARTIES

Block parties' benefits greatly increase when they occur on a street more than once a year. In a shorter period of time, neighbors become experienced in event organizing and form stronger social bonds. Only Seattle encourages more regular block parties by stating that applicants may hold up to one a month per block[3].

3       Seattle and New York also offer a "Play Streets" permit which is almost identical to a block party permit but allows the events to happen more regularly (some take place for several days a

Most block parties take place annually with a small number occurring several times a year. No city interviewed reported a problem with residents organizing too many block parties a year. Indeed, most residents take organizing seriously and prefer to limit the number of events to maintain quality and keep workloads manageable.

**Recommendations:**

1. **Allow and encourage residents to organize block parties more than once a year.**
2. **Create a "Play Streets" permit where streets can be closed weekly or even daily for children's play.**

## E. REDUCING REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

As explored further in Part 2, cities vary on how many regulatory requirements they place upon applicants. That cities with low requirements report few problems suggests that other places could relax their regulations without adverse effects.

Such changes can be challenging for many cities due to entrenched traditions. This could be addressed by testing relaxed regulations first and then continuing these lighter requirements if all goes well.

Requirements that could be relaxed include:

1. Permit application fees.
2. Simplifying forms.
3. Barricades.
4. Documented support from neighbors.
5. Days notice required.
6. Rain dates.
7. Event curfews.

**Recommendation:**

1. **Create a pilot program where certain regulatory requirements are relaxed for a defined period of time. If successful, make these changes permanent.**
2. **State required expenses upfront, rather than determining them after application.**

## F. PERMITTING PROCESSES

Some cities interviewed stated that the simpler an application process the easier it is to charge low fees. The opposite is also true. For instance, San Francisco, which charges one of the highest application fees, includes in its process an unusual and costly step: A public hearing at which upper level staff in various departments review block party applications.

In the most common process, a city department receives and

week in the evening) and places more emphasis on children's play. Cities should consider creating such a program.

reviews an application, checking that the event is not on an arterial street and is actually a block party and not another kind of special event. The application is then forwarded to, and approved by, the other departments (emergency services, police, public works, transportation, etc.) with an interest in street closures. Once all approvals are received a permit is sent to the applicant.

> "Our process is relatively simple."
>
> *Tamara Blue, Department of Transportation, Charlotte*

Some cities add other steps, such creating and reviewing traffic control plans, receiving rental confirmations from barricade companies, phoning or visiting selected neighbors to check they were contacted about the event, posting No Parking signs, and delivering city barricades. All such steps increase costs, which are often passed on to applicants in the form of higher fees.

On the other hand, some cities have simpler processes. Seattle's program was designed for simplicity, allowing individual applications to be efficiently reviewed. Many different Department of Transportation groups and other city departments were involved in the program design to ensure support for standardized guidelines. Occasionally, the city phones an applicant if their application looks to be more suitable for a special event permit due to number of attendees or types of proposed activities. This approach significantly reduces staff time and makes it easier for Seattle to offer the permit for free.

**Recommendation: Keep internal processing simple. Consider piloting simpler processes before long term implementation.**

# HOW SEATTLE ENCOURAGES BLOCK PARTIES

*Among the 31 cities interviewed for this report Seattle stands out as being the most supportive of block parties. The city understands block parties' societal benefits, trusts organizers to do the right thing, and places a low burden upon residents wanting to put together an event. As a result, many of this report's recommendations are based on Seattle's example.*

*In the below interview, Seth Geiser, Program & Policy Specialist with the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT), explains the city's values and policies around block parties and its new Play Streets program and suggests how other cities can be more accommodating toward these events.*

### HOW ARE YOU ABLE TO SET BLOCK PARTY PERMIT APPLICATION FEE TO $0?

Firstly, Seattle made a policy choice a while ago to promote more community use of the right of way. This is the main reason why block party applications are free.

Secondly, the permit application process is simple, meaning that the City has few costs to cover. Early input and agreement on program guidelines and standards allows permits meeting these standards to be administered without individual reviews for each permit. Regular communication within SDOT and with other agencies also allows for ongoing feedback and adjustments. Our group ensures the applicant lives on the block, guidelines are met, and that there are no conflicts with other activities at a particular block party location.

*"Seattle made a policy choice a while ago to promote more community use of the right of way."*

Often it takes our staff a short period of time to process applications, usually much less than the official 14 day approval period.

### HAVE THERE BEEN ANY INCIDENTS OR ISSUES ARISING OUT OF THIS LEAN APPROACH?

Seattle has a long history of no incidents when it comes to block parties. Program guidelines are set-up to avoid issues. Block parties are small-scale, low-impact gatherings that take place on low-volume, non-arterials. We require that applicants reach out to their neighbors on the block before a permit is issued. On the participant side, they have an incentive to do the right thing because they want an event that goes well and which they can hold again in the future.

### YOU ALLOW PEOPLE TO USE TRASH BINS AND FURNITURE AS BARRICADES. HAVE YOU EVER HAD PROBLEMS WITH THIS?

We have very few problems reported with this approach. Our guidelines provide regulations about the height and spacing of barricades that includes linkage via a linear element such as a rope or banner. In addition, we provide applicants with required signs for traffic control, which are simple and low cost, but standard, reflective, easy to recognize "Road

Closed To Through Traffic" signs. These guidelines have been reviewed and approved by SDOT traffic engineers as effective for low-volume, local streets where block parties are allowed. Observations in practice have shown that this approach works. We also require a higher standard of barricading when an event is adjacent to an arterial.

### DOES ANYBODY EVER APPLY FOR A BLOCK PARTY AND THEN NOT HOLD IT?

We allow people to hold up to one block party a month but I'm not aware of instances of people reserving a date and then not actually holding the event. Some people do go for the once a month opportunity, most stick to one event a year. As the permit is rather simple, we don't have a rain date option, people can just reapply.

### HOW MANY COMPLAINTS DO YOU GET ABOUT BLOCK PARTIES?

We get almost no complaints.

### HOW MUCH SUPPORT FOR BLOCK PARTIES DO APPLICANTS NEED TO DEMONSTRATE?

Applicants don't have to collect signatures of support. Firstly,

we place the notification requirement on the applicant and rely on the incentives of people wanting to be good neighbors; people see block parties as a way to connect with people on their block and so have an incentive to reach out. Secondly, block parties can only happen up to once a month per block and allow for local access during the closure, so impact to neighbors is minimal.

We've adopted the overall principle that if applicants meet all the requirements for the permit then a couple of neighbors shouldn't have veto power over a permit. We do have mechanisms for review and compliance. If we receive and application describing an event beyond the scale allowed for a block party permit, such as in university areas where an applicant might want to invite lots of people and put on major activities and entertainment, we call them up and, where necessary, bump them up to the appropriate kind of permit. The goal is to resolve permits before we issue the permit.

"Talking to other cities, people have told me that a lot of folks look at the block party permit checklists and don't even bother continuing."

## HOW MANY BLOCK PARTIES HAPPEN A YEAR?

We currently issue 200-250 block party permits a year, and over the last five years this grew at a rate of 5-8% a year, even after the Play Streets program was introduced.

## WHAT IS YOUR PLAY STREETS PROGRAM?

Play Streets is almost identical to the block party program from a permit/functional perspective. The intent of the program is a little different, focusing less on large gatherings and potlucks and more on kids playing outside and neighbors talking to each other. The program lets people use their street up to 3 days a week.

## HOW HAS YOUR BLOCK PARTY PERMIT PROCESS BEEN IMPROVED IN THE PAST?

When we removed the block party permit fee there was an increase in applications. We realized that the fee excluded people, and that this approach was more equitable.

## HOW COULD YOU IMPROVE YOUR BLOCK PARTY PERMIT PROCESS IN THE FUTURE?

We'd like to do more outreach and education and let more people know this opportunity exists. Looking at the map there are definitely areas where block parties are rare. Some people have never applied for a permit or come from places where they are not comfortable working with government. So, we're working on a wider and more diverse outreach for the program.

## HOW CAN CITIES ENCOURAGE MORE PEOPLE TO ORGANIZE BLOCK PARTIES?

Every city is different, and they are best positioned to identify approaches that work for them. In Seattle, we've had success keeping things simple, listening to communities through outreach, piloting new approaches, and monitoring their performance and making changes accordingly.

I'm sure there's a lot we could learn from other cities' approaches to developing and planning new programs and policies. We are always open to sharing information and collaborating on new concepts.

# PART 2: COMMON REGULATIONS IN BLOCK PARTY PROGRAMS

## A. BLOCK PARTY APPLICATION FEE

**$240+**
2 cities

**$100-175**
26 cities

**$0**
25 cities

**$40-99**
14 cities

**$10-30**
12 cities

## B. APPLICATION FORM LENGTH

**Unknown / n/a**
8 cities

**1 page**
9 cities

**Online**
15 cities

**2-5 pages**
16 cities

**22+ pages**
2 cities

**6-9 pages**
12 cities
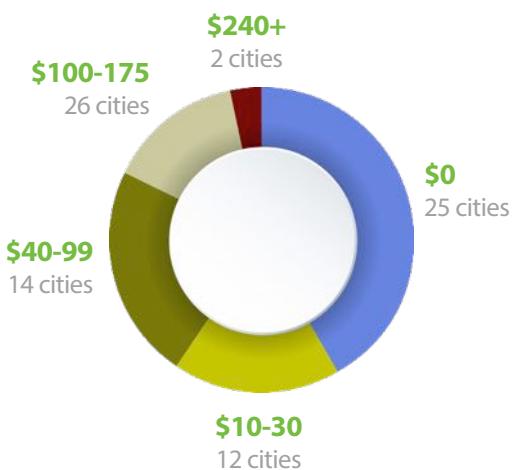
The fee that cities charge for permits influences how many people apply. Some of the cities that charge $0 stated that this encourages people to organize block parties[1]. When Seattle eliminated its fee a couple of years ago applications immediately spiked. In the reverse scenario, Corpus Christi recently started requiring applicants to pay $200-300 for a company to produce a traffic control plan, a fee previously covered by the city. Anecdotally, the city reports that people are unhappy about the fees and that applications are down.

Over half of cities charge an application fee[2] and usually justify this on the basis of cost recovery. Indeed, no matter how simple the process, cities do incur costs. Staff must be paid to process applications and in many cities the application fee covers only some of these costs, with the remaining funding coming from general funds. However, there are ways of keeping permits free through, for instance, keeping programs simple and inexpensive to administer and by subsidizing processing costs with fee income from larger events.

**Recommendation: Make permit applications free. Cover processing costs by drawing funds from fee revenues from larger events.**

1       Of all cities interviewed, none reported problems with residents applying for block parties on a whim because of low or no fees and then not holding the events.
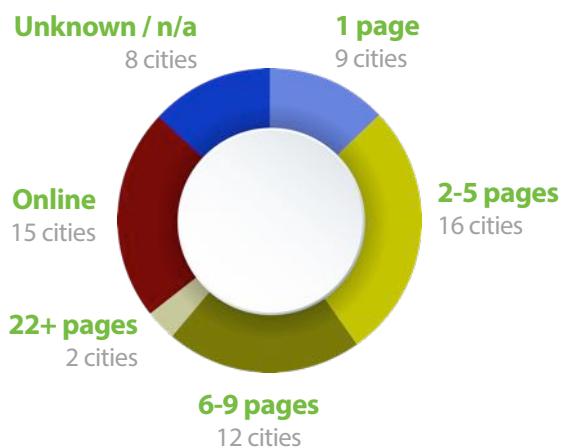2       Los Angeles stands out as an oddity: It charges easily the highest fee ($312) of all cities but in practice 75% of applicants get the fee covered by calling their local councilor's office.

It's impossible to know how many people have looked at long, complicated application forms and decided not to proceed but numerous city staff members suggest anecdotally that overly long forms do put people off from applying.

Cities such as Lexington[3] have easy to understand one-page forms that ask for a sensible amount of information: The applicant's contact information and basic details about the event. This information is easily captured in a short form.
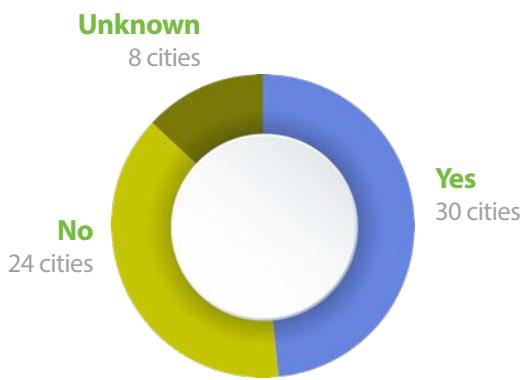
**Recommendation: Make the application form as short as possible, no more than one page.**

3       For Lexington's application form see *Appendix, Part C.*



"It's a lot of work to notify neighbors, get barricades, file the permit, and so on. Cities should make it easy, starting with putting the whole process online." - *Benji Jasik, block party organizer*

## C. IS THE FORM ONLY FOR BLOCK PARTIES?



**Unknown**
8 cities

**No**
24 cities

**Yes**
30 cities

## D. APPLICATION SUBMISSION OPTIONS



**Unknown**
3 cities

**Email**
5 cities

**2+ methods**
16 cities

**Online**
11 cities

**In person**
4 cities

**Phone**
2 cities

**Mail**
21 cities

Whether or not a form is solely for block parties or for all kinds of special events (parades, street fairs, etc.) influences that form's length. PDF application forms' median lengths are 2 pages for block party-only forms and 6 pages for special events forms.

Many online-only forms are long; although their lengths are difficult to quantify, from a subjective review only 4 out of 14 forms can be deemed short (see *Appendix*). Some cities require applicants to register online accounts and complete pages of detailed questions. Washington DC's arduous process, among many other requirements, asks applicants to specify the exact numbers of 15 types of items to be used at the block party.

> "Make the block party permit a separate application from other special events. The long form confuses a lot of people."
>
> *Deann Milliken, Special Events Coordinator, Special Events Department, Indianapolis*

> "I would move the process online."
>
> *Mike Salem, Right of Way Manager, Department of Public Works, Pittsburgh*

Given that block parties tend to be simple small-scale events, a one-page application form should be sufficient. Cities that ask for applicants' contact information and basic details about the block party (time/date, location, activities planned, estimated attendance, etc.) report no problems with this simple approach.

**Recommendation: Create an application form just for block parties, keep special events on a separate form.**
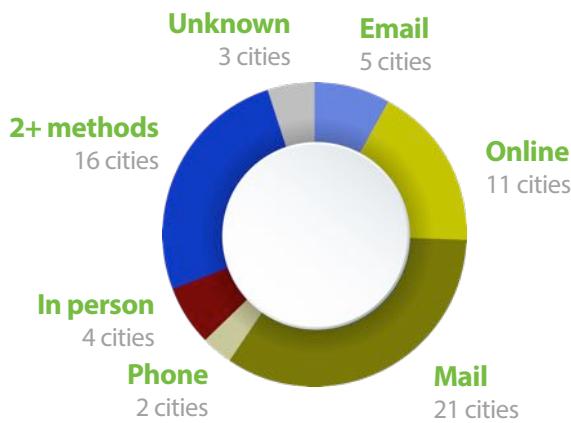
A simple and convenient submission process encourages people to apply for block parties. Although most households have internet access, only 23% of cities allow online submissions. Most cities (34%) require applicants to print, complete, and mail a form. Only 26% of cities allow two or more submission options.

A number of cities interviewed said that they would like to improve their process by allowing an online option for application and payment. This would allow cities to more easily process and keep records of applications (see *Part 1, Section C*).

**Recommendations:**

1. **Allow people to apply through a short online form, as well as via mail, email, phone, fax, and in-person.**
2. **If payment is required, allow online credit card payments in addition to checks.**

## E. BARRICADES

**Unknown / TBD**
19 cities

**Must rent**
29 cities

**Any kind**
4 cities

**Pick up for free from city**
6 cities

**City delivers for free**
4 cities
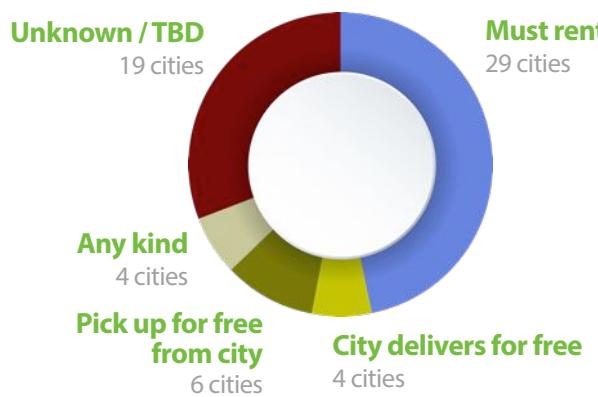
Barricade rental is often the largest expense levied upon block party organizers. Almost half of cities require applicants to pay to rent standardized barricades, as described in the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD), from third-party companies, which can cost up to $200 or more. Corpus Christi and Tuscon go even further, requiring applicants to hire a third party company to produce a traffic control plan and to pay the city to review this plan.

Only 4 cities allow organizers to use their own non-standardized barricades, such as saw horses and trash bins. None of these cities have had problems with this approach.

In fact, no city reported any barricade-related (standardized or otherwise) problems. So why are standardized barricades almost always required? Most cities reply that this regulation is in line with local, state, and federal ordinances on street closures. If there were an incident involving an automobile driving into a block party and causing harm any city adopting these ordinances would have an additional layer of protection in a lawsuit. However, given the scarcity of evidence that standardized barricades make block parties safer than non-standardized barriers cities could almost certainly relax these requirements with no impact.

*"For large events on busy streets with lots of people significant traffic control is necessary. At neighborhood block parties effective barricade approaches can be scaled to the street."*

*Seth Geiser, Program & Policy Specialist, Seattle Department of Transportation*

**Recommendations:**

1. Allow applicants to use their own barricades, such as saw horses and trash bins. Encourage, but don't require, them to post large signs labeled "Block party" on these barricades.
2. If applicants must use standardized barricades, create a city-owned barricade supply that can be loaned out for free.

## F. REQUIRED SUPPORT FROM NEIGHBORS

**100%**
10 cities

**None**
29 cities

**70-99%**
11 cities

**50-69%**
9 cities

**Undefined but must collect signatures**
3 cities
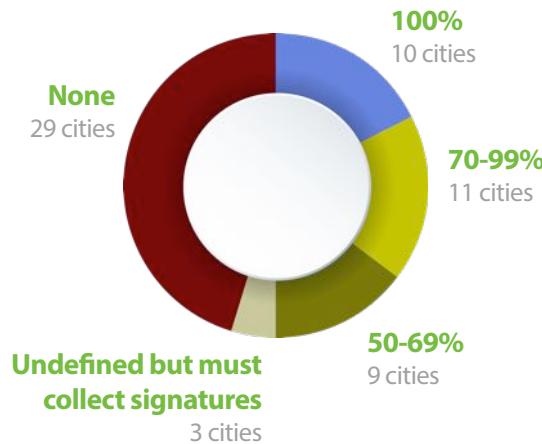
Requiring evidence of support for block parties can be demanding, requiring much time and effort from applicants.

11 cities ask for 100% of residents to sign in support. Given how challenging or impossible it can be to access 100% of a street's residents, cities deal with this requirement in a range of ways. Some simply apply the rule but don't check to see if all signatures really were gathered. A handful of cities phone a sample of residents to confirm they did indeed sign a petition. Most cities ask that applicants attempt to reach all neighbors and make a note where households couldn't be contacted.

Of the 31 cities interviewed, none, with or without a requirement to document neighbor support, reported problems with residents not knowing about a block party on their street. Some cities occasionally receive such a complaint but not in enough numbers to justify action.

*"There's never been a problem with not having the signatures requirement."*

*Deann Milliken, Special Events Coordinator, Special Events Department, Indianapolis*

**Recommendation: Don't require applicants to collect signatures of support. Instead, suggest applicants speak with their neighbors and leave a flyer if someone cannot be reached.**

## G. IS A RAIN DATE ALLOWED?

**Unknown**
4 cities

**Yes**
8 cities

**No**
50 cities
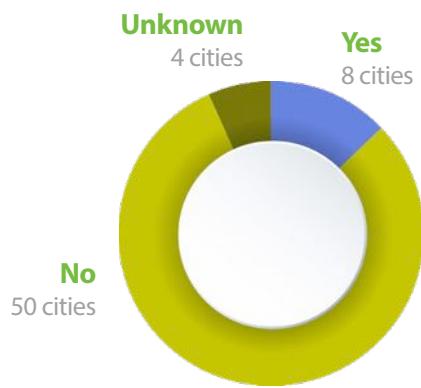
All organizers' efforts can be wasted if they cannot change their block party's date at the last minute due to inclement weather. Even if a city's application process is simple and it's easy to reapply, permit processing times still makes rain dates a suggested feature on application forms.

**Recommendation: Allow applicants to specify a rain date on the application form.**

## H. DAYS NOTICE REQUIRED

**90-120 days**
4 cities

**35-60 days**
7 cities

**3-7 days**
11 cities

**15-30 days**
21 cities

**8-14 days**
19 cities
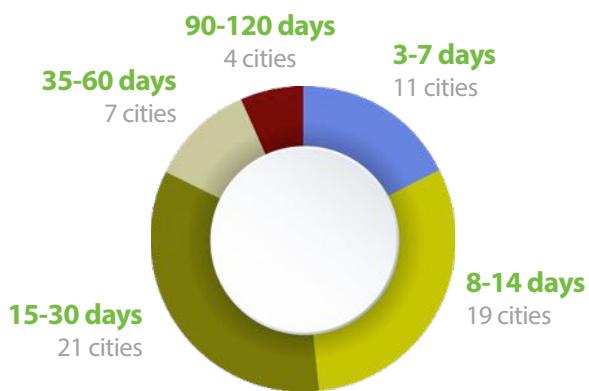
Because processing applications requires staff time, all cities require submissions a certain number of days in advance[4]. The fewer the days notice required the easier it is to apply. This can be particularly beneficial if neighbors want to take advantage of unexpectedly good weather.

**Recommendation: Require as few days notice as possible for a block party application, preferably 2 weeks or less.**

4        Anecdotal evidence from interviewees suggests that the simpler a city's application process the fewer days notice it needs.

## I. EVENT CURFEW

**8:30pm**
1 city

**9pm**
5 cities

**10pm**
9 cities

**11pm**
4 cities

**12pm**
1 city

**None**
41 cities

**1pm**
1 city
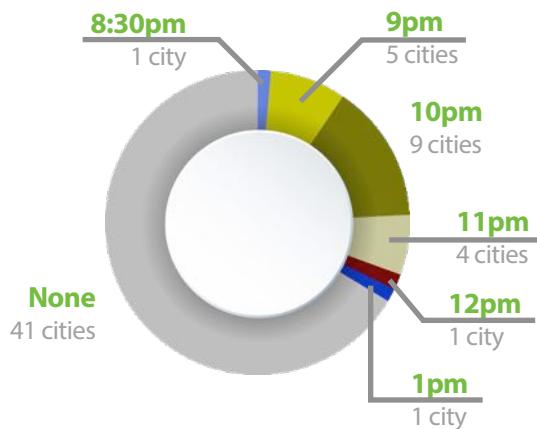
As almost all cities interviewed, including those that specify no restrictions on event hours and duration, reported that block parties generate few complaints[5] it's likely that relaxing these rules would have few negative and many positive repercussions since block parties in more lenient cities often last into the night, again with few or no complaints.

**Recommendation: Relax curfews to at least 11pm or eliminate them completely.**

5        An exception being Dallas which did introduce time restrictions after complaints.

"Hearing the kids play sounds so much better than cars roaring by." - *Walter Van Riel, block party organizer*

# Appendix

## A. FULL SURVEY DATA (Interviewed in bold)

| City | State | Population (2014) | Est. # of Events in 2016[1] | Permit Fee ($)[2] | Application Form Length (Pages)[3] | Block Party- Specific Form? | Application Submission Methods | Barricades | Support Re- quirements | Rain Date? | Days Notice[4] | Curfew |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Albuquerque** | NM | **557,169** | **Unknown** | **0** | **3** | **Yes** | **Email** | **Must rent** | **100% of residents** | **No** | **5** | **None** |
| **Anaheim** | CA | **346,997** | **30** | **0** | **Online (short)** | **Yes** | **Online** | **?** | **100% of residents** | **No** | **14** | **None** |
| **Anchorage** | AK | **301,010** | **20** | **90** | **5** | **No** | **Mail** | **Must rent** | **None** | **No** | **30** | **None** |
| Arlington | VA | 383,204 | | 34 | 1 | No | In person | Must rent | None | No | 3 | None |
| **Atlanta** | GA | **456,002** | **Unknown** | **50** | **22** | **No** | **Mail, in person** | **TBD** | **Not defined but must see outreach evidence** | **No** | **30** | **None** |
| Aurora | CO | 353,108 | | 0 | Online (medium) | Yes | Online, phone | Pick up for free from city | None | No | 10 | 9pm / 30 mins after sunset |
| Baltimore | MD | 622,793 | | 50 | 2 | Yes | Mail? | ? | None | No | 56 | 9pm |
| Boston | MA | 655,884 | | 0 | Online (medium) | Yes | Online | ? | None | No | 14 | None |
| **Charlotte** | NC | **809,958** | **100** | **0** | **1** | **Yes** | **Mail, fax** | **Must rent** | **75% of residents** | **Yes** | **28** | **None** |
| **Chicago** | IL | **2,722,389** | **"A lot"** | **0** | **1** | **Yes** | **Mail** | **Any kind** | **60% of residents** | **No** | **3** | **10pm** |
| Cleveland | OH | 389,521 | | 20 | 1 | No | Mail? | ? | None | No | 14 | None |
| Colorado Springs | CO | 445,830 | | 25 | 1 | Yes | Mail | Must rent | 100% of residents | No | 14 | 9pm |
| Columbus | OH | 835,957 | | 75 | 5 | No | Mail | Must rent | 80% of property owners | Yes | 15 | 12am |
| **Corpus Christi** | TX | **320,434** | **20** | **170** | **9** | **No** | **Email** | **Must rent** | **75% of residents** | **No** | **60** | **None** |
| **Dallas** | TX | **1,281,047** | **150-200** | **0** | **n/a** | **?** | **Mail** | **Must rent** | **100% of residents** | **Yes** | **10** | **10pm** |
| **Denver** | CO | **663,862** | **800** | **0** | **7** | **Yes** | **Email, fax, in person** | **Must rent** | **75% of residents** | **No** | **5** | **10pm** |
| Detroit | MI | 680,250 | | 0 | ? | ? | ? | ? | None | ? | 30 | None |
| El Paso | TX | 679,036 | | 65.60 | 7 | No | Mail | TBD | 100% of residents | No | 30 | None |

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1  This data only exists for cities that were interviewed. Only Milwaukee and Pittsburgh knew the exact number, the other cities gave estimates or said they didn't know.

2  This is the lowest fee possible. Some cities increase their fee depending on how many days' notice is given.

3  Where a number is given this is for PDFs. All pages, whether or not they feature sections to complete, are counted. For online forms, whose lengths cannot be quantified, a rough estimate is given for length.

4  For cities that allow different numbers of days notice at different fee levels, the number required for the lowest fee is given here.

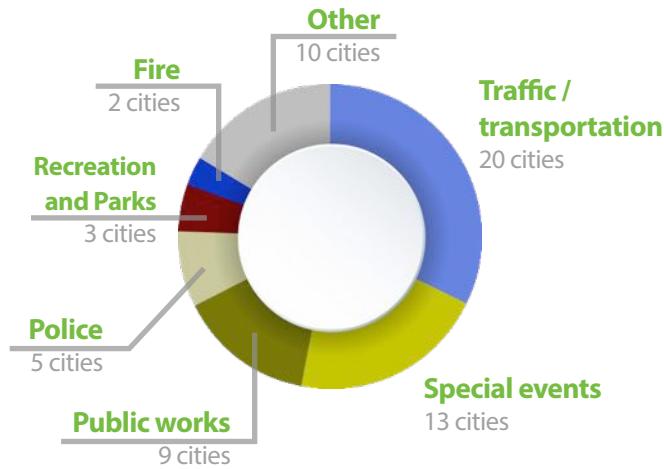| CITY | STATE | POPULATION (2014) | EST. # OF EVENTS IN 2016[1] | PERMIT FEE ($)[2] | APPLICATION FORM LENGTH (PAGES)[3] | BLOCK PARTY-SPECIFIC FORM? | APPLICATION SUBMISSION METHODS | BARRICADES | SUPPORT RE-QUIREMENTS | RAIN DATE? | DAYS NOTICE[4] | CURFEW |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Fort Worth** | **TX** | **812,238** | **150-175** | **0** | **2** | **No** | **Email, fax, mail, in person** | **Must rent** | **50% +1 of residents** | **No** | **21** | **11pm** |
| Fresno | CA | 515,986 | | 10 | ? | ? | ? | ? | 50% of residents | ? | 21 | ? |
| Honolulu | HI | 350,399 | | 0 | 1 | Yes | Mail | ? | None | No | 90 | None |
| **Houston** | **TX** | **2,239,558** | **Unknown** | **55.34** | **5** | **No** | **Mail** | **Must rent** | **None** | **No** | **90** | **None** |
| **Indianapolis** | **IN** | **848,788** | **150-200** | **0** | **Online (long)** | **No** | **Online, phone, email** | **Pick up for free from city** | **None** | **No** | **14** | **None** |
| Jacksonville | FL | 853,382 | | 0 | 1 | Yes | Email | Must rent | 60% of residents | No | 5 | 11pm |
| Kansas City | MO | 470,800 | | 0 | 3 | Yes | Mail | Pick up for free from city | 60% of residents | No | 5 | 10pm |
| Las Vegas | NV | 613,599 | | 0 | ? | ? | ? | Must rent | 75% of residents | ? | 5 | None |
| **Lexington** | **KY** | **310,797** | **30-50** | **0** | **1** | **Yes** | **Email** | **?** | **None** | **Yes** | **10** | **None** |
| **Long Beach** | **CA** | **473,577** | **1000** | **100** | **Online (short)** | **Yes** | **Online** | **Must rent** | **66% of residents** | **No** | **12** | **10pm** |
| **Los Angeles** | **CA** | **3,928,864** | **"A lot"** | **312** | **Online (medium) (3 pages)** | **Yes** | **Online** | **Pick up for free from city** | **51% of residents** | **No** | **21** | **None** |
| Louisville | KY | 612,780 | | 40 | 8 (email/mail); online (long) | No | Online | Must rent | None | No | 60 | None |
| Memphis | TN | 656,861 | | 75 | 6 | No | Mail, email | ? | None | No | 18 | None |
| Mesa | AK | 464,704 | | 0 | n/a | ? | Phone | City delivers for free | None | No | 5 | 1pm (Fri, Sat, holidays) / 10 pm (Sun-Thu) |
| **Miami** | **FL** | **2,693,117** | **50-100** | **240** | **?** | **?** | **In person** | **?** | **None** | **No** | **21** | **None** |
| **Milwaukee** | **WI** | **599,642** | **271** | **0** | **1** | **Yes** | **Email, fax, mail** | **City delivers for free** | **Not defined - "a majority".** | **Yes** | **30** | **None** |
| Minneapolis | MN | 407,207 | | 25 | Online (medium) | Yes | Online | City delivers for free | 75% of residents | Yes | 35 | 10pm |
| Nashville | TN | 644,014 | | 30 | Online (long) | No | Online | TBD | None | No | 45 | None |
| **New Orleans** | **LA** | **384,320** | **Unknown** | **130** | **6** | **No** | **In person** | **Pick up for free from city** | **100% of residents** | **No** | **10** | **None** |
| New York City | NY | 8,491,079 | | 25.62 | Online (medium) | Yes | Online | ? | None | No | 60 | None |
| Oakland | CA | 413,775 | | 100 | 3 | No | Email | ? | None | No | 30 | None |
| Oklahoma City | OK | 620,602 | | 100 | 4 | No | Email, mail | Must rent | 100% of residents | No | 30 | None |
| **Omaha** | **NE** | **446,599** | **320** | **0** | **9** | **Yes** | **Mail** | **Must rent** | **None** | **Yes** | **14** | **11pm** |

| CITY | STATE | POPULATION (2014) | EST. # OF EVENTS IN 2016[1] | PERMIT FEE ($)[2] | APPLICATION FORM LENGTH (PAGES)[3] | BLOCK PARTY-SPECIFIC FORM? | APPLICATION SUBMISSION METHODS | BARRICADES | SUPPORT RE-QUIREMENTS | RAIN DATE? | DAYS NOTICE[4] | CURFEW |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Philadelphia | PA | 1,560,297 | | 25 | 2 | No | Mail | ? | 75% of residents | Yes | 21 | 8:30pm |
| **Phoenix** | **AZ** | **1,537,058** | **150-200** | **0** | **n/a** | **?** | **Phone** | **Must rent** | **70% of residents** | **?** | **14** | **11pm** |
| **Pittsburgh** | **PA** | **305,412** | **198** | **25** | **n/a** | **?** | **In person** | **City delivers for free** | **None** | **No** | **4** | **None** |
| Portland | OR | 619,360 | | 10 | 4; online | Yes | Online, mail, fax, in person | Must rent | Must flyer all households; no signatures required | No | 6 | None |
| **Raleigh** | **NC** | **439,896** | **30-40** | **50** | **Online (medium)** | **Yes** | **Online** | **Must rent** | **None** | **No** | **30** | **None** |
| **Riverside** | **CA** | **319,504** | **15-20** | **25** | **27** | **No** | **Mail** | **Must rent** | **100% of residents/ businesses** | **No** | **30** | **None** |
| **Sacramento** | **CA** | **485,199** | **Unknown** | **25** | **5** | **Yes** | **Email, mail** | **Must rent** | **80% of residents** | **No** | **15** | **None** |
| **San Antonio** | **TX** | **1,436,697** | **50** | **100** | **4** | **No** | **Mail** | **Must rent** | **100% of residents** | **No** | **30** | **None** |
| San Diego | CA | 1,381,069 | | 0 | 7 | Yes | Mail | Must rent | 80% of residents | No | 10 | 10pm |
| San Francisco | CA | 852,469 | | 167 | 2 | Yes | Mail | Any kind | None | No | 120 | None |
| **San Jose** | **CA** | **1,015,785** | **100+ ?** | **175** | **4** | **Yes** | **Mail** | **Must rent** | **100% of residents** | **No** | **10** | **None** |
| **Santa Ana** | **CA** | **334,909** | **30** | **151** | **7** | **No** | **Mail, in person** | **Must rent** | **80% of residents / businesses** | **No** | **14** | **None** |
| **Seattle** | **WA** | **668,342** | **200-250** | **0** | **2** | **Yes** | **Mail, email, fax** | **Any kind** | **None** | **No** | **14** | **10pm / dusk** |
| **St Louis** | **MO** | **317,419** | **"Hundreds"** | **20** | **Online (long) (6 pages)** | **Yes** | **Online** | **Any kind** | **None** | **No** | **14** | **9pm** |
| Stockton | CA | 302,389 | | 55 | 6 | No | Mail | TBD | None | No | 10 | None |
| Tampa | FL | 358,699 | | 50 | 8 | No | Mail | ? | None | No | 90 | None |
| **Tucson** | **AZ** | **527,972** | **Unknown** | **0** | **2** | **No** | **Mail, email** | **Must rent** | **None** | **No** | **60** | **None** |
| Tulsa | OK | 399,682 | | 0 | Online (short) | Yes | Online | Must rent | None | No | 14 | 9pm |
| **Virginia Beach** | **VA** | **450,980** | **Unknown** | **50** | **9** | **No** | **Mail** | **Pick up for free from city** | **Not defined but must collect signatures** | **No** | **30** | **None** |
| Washington | DC | 658,893 | | 55 | Online (long) | Yes | Online, in person | ? | 51% of residents | No | 15 | 10pm |
| Wichita | KS | 388,413 | | 0 | 2 | Yes | Email, mail | Must rent | 66% of residents | No | 5 | None |

# B. OTHER APPLICATION REGULATIONS

The below elements are minor considerations, either because they are not an issue in most application processes or because they are not particularly burdensome on applicants, and are thus included below rather than in the main report.

## LEAD PERMITTING DEPARTMENTS

This is the main department that stewards the application process.

**Other**
10 cities

**Fire**
2 cities

**Recreation and Parks**
3 cities

**Police**
5 cities

**Public works**
9 cities

**Traffic / transportation**
20 cities

**Special events**
13 cities

## EARLIEST START TIME ALLOWED

A minority of cities specify that a block party can only start after a certain time.

**7am**
2 cities

**8am**
4 cities

**9am**
2 cities

**10am**
2 cities

**No restriction**
52 cities
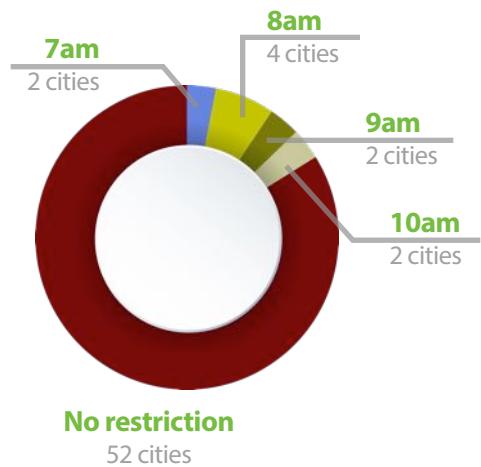
## IS INSURANCE REQUIRED?

Where insurance is required, a homeowner's existing general liability insurance is usually sufficient.

**Unknown / TBD**
7 cities

**Yes**
10 cities

**No**
45 cities
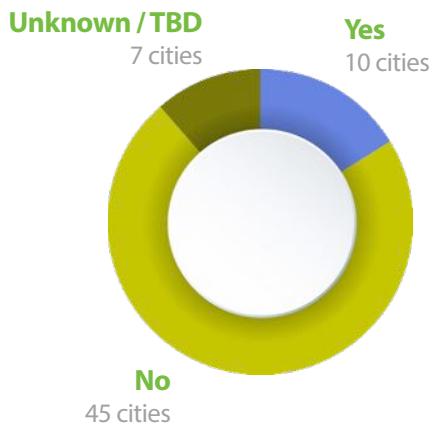
## EVENT DURATION RESTRICTION

Three cities limit the number of hours for which a block party can last.

**5 hours**
1 city

**8 hours**
1 city

**9 hours**
1 city

**No restriction**
59 cities

## IS A MAP REQUIRED?

Many cities require a map (hand-drawn is usually allowed) of the proposed event to be submitted with an application.

**Unknown**
6 cities

**Yes**
25 cities

**No**
31 cities
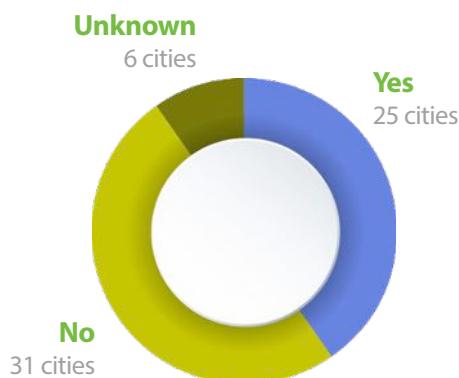
# C. MODEL APPLICATION FORMS

## SEATTLE, WA

**Features:** Aesthetically-pleasing design, information clearly laid out, limited information requested.

## NEIGHBORHOOD BLOCK PARTY APPLICATION

**SDOT** — Seattle Department of Transportation

To close off your street and register your block for your Block Party activities, complete the following information. You will receive notification of your permit within 14 days. At that point, you can print off the street closed signs and invite your neighbors to your party.

**Please submit completed application to:**

**Mail**
SDOT – Street Use Division
Attn: Annual Permits
P.O. Box #34996
Seattle, WA 98124-4996

**Fax**
Attn: Annual Permits
(206) 684-5347

**Email**
annualpermits@seattle.gov

### 1  CONTACT INFORMATION

| | |
|---|---|
| Name | |
| Address (include zip) | |
| Home Phone Number | |
| Work Phone Number | |
| Email Address | |

### 2  BLOCK PARTY DETAILS

Date of Party (allow 14 days to obtain the permit) _____

What type of activities are you planning for your Block Party? _____

_____

Estimated number of people you expect to attend _____

Time activities will begin and end _____

Location on block where Block Party activities will occur? _____

Are you planning to close your street?  ☐ Yes  ☐ No

If yes, street name and hundred block to be closed: _____

From (cross street) _____

To (cross street) _____

Intersections **cannot** be closed

**Continued**

**Features:** Limited information requested, rain date allowed, regulations clearly written.

## LEXINGTON-FAYETTE URBAN COUNTY GOVERNMENT

Version

### Division of Traffic Engineering
### NEIGHBORHOOD BLOCK PARTY APPLICATION

Location (including name of street(s)) :

Name of Responsible Party:

Address:

Phone Number:                              Phone Number (during event)

Email Address

Block Party Date:                          Rain Date (optional):

Time (from/to):          Music:                Estimated Attendance:

General Description of Event:

**A representative of the group applying for this permit shall be held responsible for supplying, erecting, and removing necessary barricades. This Division further requests that a person is positioned at the boundary limits of the Block Party, in the event that access to the area is necessary by a resident or an emergency vehicle.**

The Division of Traffic Engineering is authorized through Sections 18-14 and 18-15 of the Code of Ordinances of the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government as the only office that may permit street or portions of them to be closed for block party (block public right-of-way for a short time) use.

A permit may be issued only:
1. To an adult resident of the interested neighborhood, neighborhood association president or church pastor.
2. If the neighborhood has been notified of the party.
3. If the neighborhood takes part (no private parties allowed).
4. If a LexTran route will not be interrupted.
5. If the permit is requested ten (10) days prior to the date of block party.
6. If the permit holder (group representative) is held responsible for supplying, erecting, and removing necessary barricades for the event.

NO OTHER LAW OR ORDINANCE SHALL BE VIOLATED.

Submittal of this application does not guarantee approval.
This application will have to be reviewed by a variety of Government entities.
You will be informed if this application is approved or dis-approved within 10 days.

You should receive confirmation of your application by the next business day.
If you do not receive confirmation or have questions please call 258-3830.

Submit by Email                              Print Form

# D. QUOTES FROM NEIGHBORS ABOUT BLOCK PARTIES

## AT THE BLOCK PARTIES

"It was great seeing all the generations together at the block party. It made our street more of a community."
- Gitta Salomon, neighbor

"Hearing the kids play sounds so much better than cars roaring by."
- Walter Van Riel, block party organizer

"I'm not the type to host events at home with my neighbors. The block party was the perfect compromise."
- Patricia Oliveira, neighbor

"I have so many great memories from our block parties. I love seeing the homemade dishes at the potluck and the open-air movie night is always lots of fun."
- Emma Smith, block party organizer

"Watching all the kids and neighbors coming together was really fun."
- Katelyn Kimmons, neighbor

"I cherished hearing stories about our block from our most senior residents."
- Patricia Oliveira, neighbor

## AFTER THE EVENTS

"Connecting with the people who live on our street, even just once a year, has had lasting effects."
- Walter Van Riel, block party organizer

"Now that we know each other, people smile and wave at me in the street."
- Emma Smith, block party organizer

"Since the block party I'm more inclined to speak to people when I see them on the block."
- Katelyn Kimmons, neighbor

"Now I'm more comfortable greeting neighbors and even chatting about what's new."
- Patricia Oliveira, neighbor

"Because of the block party, my daughter now babysits for two of our neighbors and I've hired a neighbor to help with home projects and yard work."
- Jason Mitchell, neighbor

## APPLYING FOR BLOCK PARTIES

"Cities can help foster more block parties by making the permit paperwork as simple as possible. Clear links and instructions on the city website are key."
- Emma Smith, block party organizer

"A city should have a small marketing program to advertise the benefits of block parties and provide an FAQ on how to put one together. Social media could assist in this effort."
- Patricia Oliveira, neighbor

"It's a lot of work to notify neighbors, get barricades, file the permit, and so on. Cities should make it easy, starting with putting the whole process online."
- Benji Jasik, block party organizer

## PLANNING

"Planning the event helped me get to know my neighbors before the block party itself."
- Katelyn Kimmons, neighbor

"Planning the block party brought us together as much as the block party itself."
- Emma Smith, block party organizer