



HOW TO ORGANIZE A NEIGHBORHOOD BLOCK PARTY

A best practices guide by the
City of Sugar Land

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City of Sugar Land



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WHY ORGANIZE A BLOCK PARTY?

Block Parties are simply a GREAT way to meet your neighbors! They provide a casual relaxed setting where residents can meet, play, eat, and hopefully, find similarities that bring them closer together. With a little effort and consistency, a neighborhood of strangers can be transformed into a connected community of families that care for each other and the overall health and vibrancy of their neighborhood.

To be successful, a Block Party requires some planning. This guide is intended to help you and your neighborhood organize, find needed resources, advertise, and make sure all the necessary approvals and permits (as needed) have been filed. To make organizing your block party even easier, neighborhood groups registered with the City of Sugar Land may also reserve the City's block party trailer, The Sugar Cube! This trailer contains essentially everything you will need to throw your block party—except food and neighbors! This is a free service offered to our Sugar Land residents. To find out more about the trailer and its availability, please visit the Sugar Cube web page.

Remember, this is just a guide. Feel free to experiment with other strategies and share your thoughts and experiences with us. This will help other residents in their planning. Share ideas, pictures, recipes—anything to help make someone's next block party an even greater success!

1. PLANNING

Planning is Everything!

The most “effortless” looking events are usually the ones that are most carefully planned. To make sure you and your neighborhood residents have a great time at the block party, you will need to plan ahead. Here are some helpful tips:

- Allow at least 4-6 weeks of planning time before your event.
- Find a group of individuals in your neighborhood who are willing to work together to form an organizing committee.
- Once formed, divide up tasks: applications, budget, publicity, food, activities, set up, clean up, etc.
- Decide how large a group you want to invite— just your block, the entire neighborhood, or something in between.
- Brainstorm a theme. Choose a theme that speaks to the time of year or weather. Decorate with pops of bold color on everything from florals to food.
- Pick a date, time and location, and make sure to have a “bad weather” plan.
- Be sure to notify nearby neighbors of your plan to throw a block party and where the party will be.
- If you want to reserve the Sugar Cube, be sure to confirm its availability and register your neighborhood with the City. Registration is required in order to be eligible to reserve the block party trailer.
- Reservations for the Sugar Cube must be submitted a minimum of fifteen business days prior to the desired reservation.
- Be sure to contact the City for street closures and permits (if required) at least 45 days prior to the event. (see Special Events Application)

Most of all: HAVE FUN!

2. GETTING THE WORD OUT

You have your team collected—but now what? You need to find the best way to let people know about the block party. You have several options:

- Prepare a flyer. The City of Sugar Land has a Block Party Flyer template available on the Block Party page of the website. This file is editable. Just fill it out and hit print! Be sure to include an RSVP contact if you need to have a total head count.
- Visit your neighbors. Now that you have your flyer in hand, the most effective means of spreading the word about the Block Party is word of mouth. If time permits and you have a large enough team, divide up your party area into manageable block sizes and assign each volunteer a few streets. Not only are you inviting your neighbors, but going door-to-door provides the perfect opportunity to introduce yourself, and get to know your community members. People are more inclined to participate when they know a few friendly faces.
- Make door hangers. You may not be able to reach everyone going door-to-door. Before you head out, it is a good idea to staple a rubber band to the corner of the flyer. If someone does not answer, just hang the flyer on the door handle.
- Use Nextdoor. If you have not already done so, Nextdoor is a social media website designed just for neighborhoods. It is free and creates a “virtual” neighborhood group for only people that live in your subdivision. You can easily communicate with your neighbors, share ideas, or ask for help in preparation for the event. Visit www.Nextdoor.com to sign up.
- Email residents: Email addresses provide another very easy way to communicate with your neighbors if available.
- Social Media: If you have a neighborhood Facebook page or tools such as electronic newsletters or other forms of social media, use them. The more ways you try to reach your crowd, the better your chances of them attending.
- Phone Tree: If phone numbers are available, divide up the lists and have several committee members call to invite residents to the party. This also creates an opportunity to get to know someone and increases your chances of them attending.

3. ACTIVITIES AND FOOD

The City of Sugar Land's Sugar Cube is stocked with games for people of all ages and guaranteed to make your party a success! Of course, feel free to add your own activities to those provided. Whatever you choose, remember to plan for some fun activities and ice-breakers. The goal of the block party is for people to get to know each other. One more thing to consider in your planning is that our city's demographics are changing: we are becoming more diverse and we have an aging population. Think about your neighborhood: Are there several generations of residents? Are you a racially or ethnically diverse neighborhood? If so, are there ways to bridge these gaps? Are there opportunities to share stories, information, or skills?

And when it comes to food, there is no need for it to become complicated or expensive. Here are some suggestions:

- Ask everyone to bring a dish for their family plus a little extra to share. If serving is done buffet style, having people RSVP with their food item may be a good idea to ensure there is a broad range of items.
- Have a BBQ where each family brings their own hotdogs, hamburgers, etc.
- If cups, plates, utensils and other items to share are being purchased, have a donation box available for residents to help contribute (a suggested donation to cover expenses is helpful).

Please remember to take photos of your activities and the party, and to upload them to your neighborhood Facebook page (if you have one), and to our city social media pages using #SLsugarcube! Your party may inspire other neighborhoods to do the same!

4. THE SUGAR CUBE

Block Party Trailer Reservation

The City's block party trailer, The Sugar Cube is available for FREE to Registered Groups located within the corporate limits of the City of Sugar Land. This includes Home Owner's Associations, Neighborhood Associations, and other Recognized Community Groups.

If your neighborhood does not have a Neighborhood Association or a Home Owners' Association, and you are not registered with the city, not a problem! Simply contact the Community Engagement Office at hoa@sugarlandtx.gov or visit the website and register your group. There is no fee to register. We simply want to have a means to connect with your neighborhood to share important information.

Once you are registered, simply check the online calendar for availability and fill out the application form. Reservations for the Sugar Cube must be submitted a minimum of fifteen business days prior to the desired reservation.

Reservations are on a first-come, first-served basis and restricted to weekends only- excluding those in close proximity to official City holidays where the City is hosting a special event (Memorial Day, July 4th, etc.). Reservations will be accepted up to one year in advance. Registered groups may only reserve the Sugar Cube once every quarter.

If you are ready to make your reservation, fill out the Sugar Cube online reservation today!

5. WHAT'S INSIDE

As mentioned, the City's block party trailer contains much of what you need to make your party a success. You just have to invite your neighbors (using our flyer template, if you wish), and plan the food. Here is a list of what is provided:

Games

- Giant Pass the Pigs
- Apples to Apples
- UNO
- UNO Express
- Pictionary Card Game
- Scrabble Card Game
- Dominoes
- Candy Land
- Connect 4
- Chess
- Playing Cards (2 decks)
- Cornhole set
- Ring Toss
- Giant Dice set for Yahtzee and Farkle
- Giant Wood Toppling Tower
- Giant Connect 4
- Giant Frisbee
- Trac Ball set
- Jazzminton
- 6 playground balls
- 2 Chalk Boards/Dry Erase Boards with chalk and colored markers

Trailer Items

- Tables
 - 4 kids picnic tables
 - 8 6' folding tables
- Chairs
 - 30 folding chairs
- 1 recycle can
- 1 trash can
- 2 ice chests
- Tents
 - 4 10'x10' pop-up tents
 - 8 tent weights
 - 4 tent lights
- First Aid Kit
- 2 Fire Extinguishers
- Barricading
 - 20 traffic cones with chain
 - 6 Barricades
 - 1 Traffic sign
- 2 A-Frame Sign Holders

6. TRAILER INTERIOR & EXTERIOR

Interior:

- Placement of items: All items should be returned back to the trailer after use in the original condition and places from which they were found.
- Pictures of where to put items are located on the inside doors of the trailer. Make sure that all items are secured within the trailer. Items should be cleaned and wiped down prior to placing them back inside the trailer and before the trailer is picked up. Please be sure these items are cleaned:
 - Tables
 - Chairs
 - Ice Chests
 - Trash cans

Do not allow children to enter the trailer or play on or in the trailer at any time.

Exterior:

- Door Locks - The trailer has three -door padlocks. The access code will be provided by City Staff upon drop off. Please keep the trailer doors locked when not in use.
- Exterior Locks - The trailer comes with a hitch lock and a boot to ensure that the trailer will not be moved. Do not touch these locks.
- Wrap/Frame - Do not pull on the exterior wrap of the trailer or alter it. The trailer should not be used as a support for an awning, any projector screen or other items.

Did you know?

The trailer is stocked with City of Sugar Land flyers and information!

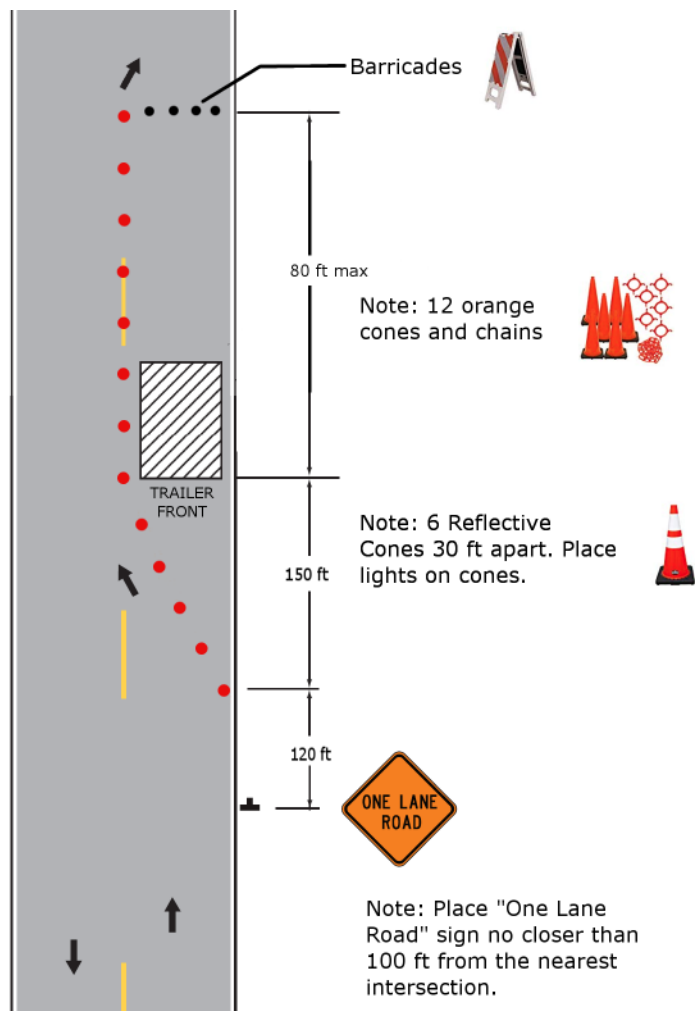
7. SET-UP AND CLEAN-UP

Everything is planned, now it is time to make it happen! Be sure you have as many volunteers as needed to carry out all the tasks of your block party. Here are some helpful tips:

- Plan to start setting up at least 2 hours before the event.
- Be sure to place signs at your party. The Pop-Up Party Trailer includes two a-frame sign holders where you can design and print a sign which can be used to welcome people to your party. OR use The City of Sugar Land has a Block Party Sign template available on the Block Party page of the website. This file is editable. Just fill it out and hit print!
- Set up the provided cones and traffic sign according to the provided diagram.
- Ensure that you keep one lane of travel open at all times unless you have secured a permit for total street closure.
- Bring grills, chairs and tents (if needed).
- Set up tables for food.
- Be sure to get the drinks into the ice coolers early so that they are ready when the party starts.
- Designate a safe area for games and activities and set them up.
- Have enough trash bags on hand to change out from trash cans when they get full.
- Assign a greeter, and consider a sign-up table. To stay in touch with residents and for future planning, collect emails and phone numbers from attendees.
- Have people leave with what they brought, including extra food.
- Bring storage bags in the event of unclaimed leftovers.
- Be sure to clean up the street and any yards that may have been used during the party. Everyone will appreciate it!
- Have a designated place to put trash and recycling before trash day. A few neighbors can share the load. Do not place trash in the trailer.
- If you used the Sugar Cube, be sure to repack it with everything that was inside. Items need to be secured as they were when delivered to you. This will ensure that items do not get damaged before the next person uses it.

8. TRAFFIC CONTROL PLAN

Having a safe environment is critical to the success of your block party, please set up the provided cones, barricades, and traffic sign according to the provided diagram. Ensure that you keep one lane of travel open at all times unless you have secured a special events permit for total street closure.



Sugar Cube Block Party Trailer - Traffic Control Plan
30 mph residential roadway

9. SUGAR CUBE GUIDELINES

Please familiarize yourself with the following guidelines when utilizing the City of Sugar Land's Block Party Trailer.

- The Sugar Cube can only be moved by City of Sugar Land staff. Residents are not permitted to move the trailer at any time.
- Street closures are prohibited unless authorized by a Special Events Permit. One (1) street lane must remain open at all times to allow for emergency access to the Block Party and any surrounding areas.
- A recognized group must submit a Special Events Permit Application a minimum of 45 days prior to the requested date if: The anticipated attendance for the block party is more than 100 people, and/or a street closure is requested.
- Use of the trailer for private events such as birthday parties, graduation parties is strictly prohibited. Use of the trailer for fundraising events is strictly prohibited.
- In the case of a weather related cancellation, please contact ParkReservations@sugarlandtx.gov to reschedule a reservation.
- In the case that a motorized vehicle hits the trailer, please contact the Parks & Recreation Department at 281-275-2885 as soon as possible.
- Per City Ordinance No.2065, your event and/or amplified sound can only occur on Saturdays between 7am-10pm or Sunday between 7am-9pm. Maximum noise level cannot exceed 85 db(C) at the nearest property line.
- Per City Ordinance No. 2065, it is unlawful for any person to consume or possess an alcoholic beverage in an open container unless allowed under a special events permit.

10. WHEN TO SEEK A PERMIT

Your block party may require additional permits!

Please visit the City's website www.sugarlandtx.gov to learn the requirements, get an application, and find out how long to allow for approval. Listed below are the top three most common permits your block party may need:

Special Events Permit

Your neighborhood's block party may require a Special Events Permit through the City of Sugar Land if the anticipated attendance is greater than 100 people, and/or a street closure is requested. Applications must be submitted a minimum of 45 days prior to the event's requested date. Please contact Visit Sugar Land at 281-275-2045 or email tourism@sugarlandtx.gov for more information.

Temporary Food Permit

Your neighborhood's block party may require a Temporary Food Permit through the City of Sugar Land if the event plans on offering food or beverages to the public (for free or for sale) at a location other than a permanent fixed food establishment. Please contact the Food Inspection Program at 281-275-2170 or email foodinspection@sugarlandtx.gov for more information.

Fire Marshal - Fireworks, Pyrotechnics, & Special Effects Permit Application

Your neighborhood's block party may require a Fire Permit through the City of Sugar Land if the event plans on including fireworks, pyrotechnics or special effects. Please contact Fire-EMS at 281-275-2850 or email fire@sugarlandtx.gov for more information.

11. LAST BUT NOT LEAST

Don't Forget!

Once the party is finished and everything is cleaned up, please do a few things that will help with future events. These will help not just you, but other neighborhoods as well.

- Remember to thank all who attended, especially anyone who helped with the organizing and execution of the party. A little appreciation goes a long way! You will have many more hands to help the next time you plan a neighborhood event. You can do this in person at the end of the event or, if you have collected contact information from attendees, an email to all will also do the trick! Having regular communication with your neighbors will also help you identify others who may want to help in the future.
- Share photos, recipes, and suggestions. We want to see how our neighborhoods are throwing their parties, and hear how we can make the process better. Let us know what made the party successful and what connections were made. You may inspire others to throw their own parties! Remember to use #SLsugarcube when posting!
- Continue to build relationships. When you are planning your next event, do not reinvent the wheel! You already have a group in place that helped organize this party. Maybe you heard from a few others who also would like to help out. Be sure to cultivate those relationships. Meet informally for coffee or dinner, or dessert in the park. The stronger your core group is, the easier it will be to plan your next event.
- Don't let too much time pass between neighborhood events. While the energy and momentum from your first neighborhood event are still high, start thinking about what you can do next. Having a calendar of neighborhood events for the next 6 months can help with planning and dividing up responsibilities.