

A GUIDE TO A SUCCESSFUL NEIGHBORHOOD

Tip Sheet: Neighborhood Block Parties

A series of how-to guides for residents working to improve their neighborhoods.

Why Have a Block Party?

Dear Bedford Resident,

For many generations block parties have served as a way for neighbors to meet each other. Some block parties are organized around holidays such as the 4th of July or Labor Day. Others may start because of a desire to meet new neighbors or build a feeling of community. Whatever the motive, block parties often lead to further gatherings of neighbors, and may result in neighborhood improvements such as a new park, play equipment, or a neighborhood clean up campaign.

You don't have to live in a district of single family homes to be involved in a block party. Block parties can happen in townhouse complexes, in apartment buildings, or even in a park near a condominium. A block party is simply a group of neighbors who work together to organize a social event for their neighborhood.

This kit is organized so that all necessary information, forms, and "do's and don'ts" are included. In addition, your neighbors Joan Turnberg and Serena Danielson have experience organizing block parties in Bedford and have offered to be a resource for you. You will find their contact information on the contact page and examples of some of their materials.

So don't hesitate! Gather a couple of neighbors, pick a date, follow the instructions in the guide, and invite everyone to join in!

Sincerely,

Cathy Cordes, Carolyn Colonero, Carolyn Bottum, Sue Baldauf
Block Party Task Force of the
Violence Prevention Coalition of Bedford

With grateful appreciation to the city of Fremont, CA for template assistance and ideas.

Table of Contents

Why Have a Block Party?	pg. 1
10 Reasons to Have a Block Party	pg. 3
How to Start Organizing	pg. 4
Good Ideas.....	pg. 5
Reminders	pg. 6
Sample Block Party Invitation.....	pg. 7
Block Party Details Sheet	pg. 8
Suggested Activities	pg.9
Getting Your Neighbors to the Block Party	pg.10
Fun Family Activities.....	pg.11
Useful Phone Numbers	pg.12
Block Party Registration Form.....	pg.13
Sunnyfield Road Sample Invitation.....	pg. 14
Sunnyfield Road Block Party Games/Activities.....	pg. 15
Ledgewood/Lido Sample Invitation.....	pg. 16
Ledgewood/Lido Sample “Find Someone Who”.....	pg. 17
Ledgewood/Lido Block Party Organizer Checklist/Food....	pg.18-19

10 Reasons To Have a Block Party:

1. To have fun – no excuse or reason is needed to celebrate!
2. To meet your neighbors.
3. To increase the sense of *belonging* in your neighborhood.
4. To organize a city-sponsored group such as Neighborhood Crime Watch or Community Emergency Response Team (CERT).
5. To make connections within the community. When you know people, you can exchange skills or resources and perhaps organize a book club, baby-sitting co-op, share walking to school duties, or find new friends for your children.
6. To plan a campaign to plant gardens or work together in other ways to beautify the neighborhood.
7. To enjoy neighborhood play for one day, for example to play baseball or hockey or set up a kids jump house.
8. To meet some of the long-time residents in the neighborhood and learn about its history.
9. To have a neighborhood clean-up day, play some good music and barbecue once all of the work is done.
10. To start a yearly neighborhood tradition of getting together at least once a year!

Suggestions on How to Start Organizing

1. Gather a partner or two in the neighborhood and float the idea of a block party. Decide where the neighborhood starts and stops. Decide on whether to have a theme or activities. Decide what to do about food, i.e., donated, potluck, just desserts. Do folks bring their own drinks? Who brings paper products, utensils, name tags, tables, chairs? Divide up the tasks.
2. Start knocking on doors or calling neighbors to find out if there is enough interest and, if so, which day would be the best for the most people.
3. Pick a date and time (mid-afternoon to evening works best). Respect neighborhood quietness after 9:00pm. Think of an alternate plan in case of poor weather. September works well for many groups.
4. Go door to door.
 - Hand out an invitation (use or adapt examples included in this guide or create your own).
 - Ask people to fill out the Block Party details sheet and let them know where to return it.
 - Ask people if they object to the street's being closed, if you are hoping to use a public way for your block party. If they object, note that on the Block Party Registration Form. This will indicate that all neighbors have been contacted about use of a public way. Plan the block party for the area of the street to be closed where people have agreed to participate. Complete the necessary form and deliver it to the Police Department.
 - Recruit volunteers to bring tables for food, grills if grilling, garbage and recycling containers.
 - Call folks new to the neighborhood and others you have not heard from to issue a special invitation and encouragement, especially in the first or second year of getting started.
5. Decide if this will be a block party restricted to those on the street/block or if people will be able to invite friends/relatives (if yes, how many). Make this clear in your flyer/invitation.

Good Ideas

- Invite a Town official, school principal or other town committee member or town employee.
- Call town departments to obtain literature, give-aways, or to request a presentation (see Useful Phone Numbers for ideas).
- Make sure you have a record of everyone who attends and everyone you contacted; after all, the idea of a block party is to connect neighbors. An email list can be a great way to remind folks as the block party nears and to communicate quickly about other important neighborhood issues.
- Identify special talents your neighbors might have – you may be living next to a magician, singer, dancer, artist, radio host or prize-winning cook.
- Plan some activities for children. Invite a neighborhood teenager to help organize/supervise younger kids.
- Have an environmentally-friendly party. Ask everyone to bring their own reusable plates, cups and cutlery to limit paper garbage and litter.
- Include activities that encourage people to meet each other. Use nametags and include children by asking them to create the tags.
- Make sure that people with disabilities can participate in the activities and include their attendants (those with Seeing Eye dogs or in wheelchairs).
- Institute a bathroom policy of “everyone use their own” so that home security is maintained. Designate a nearby neighbor in the event of an emergency requiring bathroom facilities.
- Inspire clean up after the party by rewarding children with a prize for picking up garbage.
- Have a block/street clean up as part of the party. Also, neighbors may want to contribute towards the cost of a truckload to the dump and use this to clean out gardens, garages and alleys.
- Have a drawing with donated items.

REMINDERS

- Submit the enclosed form to the Bedford Police Department, 2 Mudge Way, to register your block party two weeks before the event. You may contact them at 781-275-1212 if you have questions or need more information. The Police will keep your block party information available so that Town emergency personnel are aware of your neighborhood event on the day it is to occur. If you are proposing to close a portion of a street, the Police may require a special detail officer to be assigned to the neighborhood at your expense. This cost will vary depending on the day and length of your event, the range being between \$175 and \$300.**
- Alcohol is only permitted on private property, not on public streets or in parks.**
- Residents should observe security precautions, for example locking back doors to houses and keeping equipment in sight.**
- In hot weather food spoils quickly: all perishables such as mayonnaise, salads or meats should be stored in coolers and be kept at the proper temperature.**
- Food cannot be sold on public streets unless the proper permits have been obtained from the Board of Health.**
- Loud amplification of music considered by police to reach the level of 'disturbing the peace' is prohibited.**
- Remember, when you set up tables and chairs on the street, that emergency vehicles may need to have access to the area, so leave a space at least 18 feet wide available for a large emergency vehicle to pass.**
- Observe safety precautions for all activities. For example keep barbecues away from activities for children.**
- If using a public way, post signs the day before reminding everyone to remove cars and that the street will be closed. Make sure to avoid closing any areas where neighbors have objected on the Block Party Registration Form.**
- Call or visit new neighbors to personally invite them, especially if they have not responded to the block party invitation.**

YOU ARE INVITED TO



DATE: _____

TIME: _____

PLACE: _____

THEME/EVENT: _____



To RSVP or to help out, please phone:

_____ at _____ or
_____ at _____

If you have concerns about access to the neighborhood and would like to speak with someone about safety issues, please contact us ASAP.

Block Party Details

We are glad you can join us for the Block Party

On _____ at _____
(date) (time)

RAIN DATE: _____

We are asking each family to bring:

- chairs to sit on
- your own meats or vegetarian food to barbecue
- 1 salad and 1 desert to share (make enough for ___ people)
- your own beverages - coffee and tea will be provided
- your own non-breakable plates, cups and cutlery
- other _____

In addition, do you have the following that could be used:

_____ A barbecue _____ tables _____ coolers

Do you have a talent that you would like to share with us?

Suggestions for activities you could organize?

Please return this form by _____ (date) to:

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

Suggested Activities for Getting to Know Your Neighbors

4th of July

- Who can trace their family origins back the farthest.
- Who is the newest “American”.
- Play charades using American Heroes.
- A cake decorated with the American flag.
- Patriotic music.

Neighborhood History

- Research through the library and the Bedford Historical Society.
- Identify any special people that lived in your area such as the oldest resident, politician, artist, eccentric, hero, etc. Have partygoers guess who, what, where through charades and other games.

Cultural Connections

- Have everyone bring their 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 they like best about it.

Neighborhood Action

- Discuss what issues/concerns people may have (keep this to a predetermined time: remember, a block party should be fun).
- Establish teams to explore how to resolve the concerns.
- Have a clean-up time.
- Build a bench, plant a garden, paint street numbers, etc. as part of the block party activities.

Getting Your “New American” Neighbors 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.

Fun Family Activities For Block Parties

- Invite a Clown, Balloon Artist, or Magician
- Water Balloon or Egg Toss
- Rent a “Jump House”
- Hide and Seek
- Face Painting
Remember to use non-toxic paint
- Organize a Kids Talent Show or Parade
- Sidewalk Chalk
Make it a game for the kids and give out prizes
- Pictionary or Charades
- “Name that Baby”
Have everyone bring a childhood photo and see who can guess who’s who
- Play Musical Chairs
- Rent a Popcorn or Snow Cone Machine

NOTE: These activities require adult supervision! Before you offer, decide how much energy and focus you are able to give when you might want some social time, too....

Useful Phone Numbers

Abandoned Vehicle Hotline:	781-275-1212
Animal Services:	781-275-1212, x120
Bedford Block Party Organizers	
• Joan Turnberg.....joan.turnberg@verizon.net or 781-223-8555	
• Serena Danielson.....serenad@verizon.net or 781-275-2760	
CERT – Community Emergency Response Team.....	781-275-7262
Town of Bedford Website Address:	http://www.bedfordma.gov
Community Preservation/Code Enforcement:.....	781-275-7446
Counseling – Youth and Family Counseling Center:	781-275-7727
Community Engagement Unit (Crime Prevention/Safety Presentations/Community Events):	781-275-1212, x174
Fire Department Administration:	781-275-7262
Housing (Landlord/Tenant questions):	781-275-2428
Maintenance (DPW):	781-275-7605
Neighborhood Crime Watch Program:	781-275-1212,x121
Planning:	781-275-1548
Recreation Services:	781-275-1392
Senior Center/Council on Aging (COA):.....	781-275-6825
Smoke Detector Program:	781-275-5266
Solicitor Permit Verification at Finance:	781-275-2218
Speed Bump Inquiries:	781-275-1212
Street Crimes Unit:	781-275-1212
Street Lights Out:	781-275-7605
Traffic Unit (police enforcement for traffic related problems): ...	781-275-1212
EMERGENCIES, POLICE, FIRE, MEDICAL:	911
To REPORT EMERGENCIES by CELL PHONE:	911
POLICE NON-EMERGENCY GENERAL BUSINESS:.....	781-275-1212
POLICE DEPARTMENT WEBSITE:.....	http://www.bedfordpd.org



Bedford Block Party Application

Contact Information

Name	
Street Address	
City State ZIP Code	
Home Phone	
Cell Phone (For contact during Block Party)	
E-Mail Address	

Party Information

All Block Parties should end and have any requested barricades removed by 9:00 p.m.

Location & Date *(Be specific)* _____

Are you requesting to use the public way? Yes No

Are you requesting to close the street? Yes No From _____ To _____

NOTE: All the neighbors must be notified if a public way is to be closed. The contact person verifies that all the neighbors have been notified by virtue of submission of this application. If any neighbor objects, this must be indicated here:

Would you like?

Please check all that apply.

- Police Detail
- Barricades
- Visit from Fire Truck
- Visit from Police Car
- Town Representative

Note: All requests for barricades and visits from Police, Fire, or Town representative must be received by the Town of Bedford with a two week notice before the event. It is anticipated that there may be more requests for Police and Fire vehicles that can be filled. We will forward your request to the appropriate department and honor as many requests as possible.

Game Requests

Some games may be available on loan from Bedford Recreation Department. Please contact them directly at 781-275-1392 to request items of interest and arrange for pick up.

Please return form to:

Bedford Police Department
Attn: Traffic Enforcement Officer
2 Mudge Way
Bedford, MA 01730

For Official Use Only

Traffic Enforcement Officer	_____
Chief of Police	_____
Fire Department	_____
DPW	_____



Save the Date! The 2nd Annual Sunnyfield Road Block Party

When: Sunday September 16 (rain date 9/ 23)

Time: 2:00pm-5:00pm

Food: Even number houses, bring a dessert; odd number, a side dish

Grills: Will be available for **you** to use, so feel free to bring burgers and hot dogs or whatever for your family

For the **kids** there will once again be a **talent show**, games and activities! A donation of \$2 per child is appreciated to cover the cost of kids activities and drinks. If you would like to contribute, please see Serena (7 Sunnyfield) or Ann (9 Sunnyfield)

New this year! Help support the Bedford Food Pantry by bringing along a canned good or non-perishable item

Questions contact:
sunnyfieldroad@gmail.com



BLOCK PARTY GAMES/ACTIVITIES



- Tug of War / Beanbag Toss / Potato Sacks: All of these items we borrowed from the Bedford Recreation Dept.
- Bocce Game
- 4 Square
- Sidewalk Chalk
- Kickball Game
- Face Painting and Tattoos: Two neighborhood high school girls volunteered to do the face painting.
- Volleyball Game: One of our neighbors had a net, so we just set it up in a central location.
- Talent Show for the Kids: This was a big hit the first year.
- Donuts on the String: Last year, I set up mini powdered donuts at varying lengths on the sides of the tent.
- Playdough/Arts and Crafts (Coloring Pages) Table for the Little Ones.
- Ben's Musical Band: One of our neighbors, Ben, who is in 7th grade, played a few songs with his band.
- Ice Cream Truck to Visit During the Block Party: We called 'Mo the Ice Cream Man' to come to the block party at the end. It was a great surprise to all of the kids.
- Neighborhood Picture: One of our neighbors is a professional photographer, and he took a full neighborhood picture and submitted to the Bedford paper.

10th ANNUAL LIDO - LEDGEWOOD BLOCK PARTY...Wow 10 years!

DATE: Saturday, September 8, 2007 (first Sat. after Labor Day)
(Raindate - Sunday, September 9, 2007)

TIME: 1pm - 4:30pm

WHERE: Lido Lane cul-de-sac (near 11 and 13 Lido Lane)

WHY: To say "hi" to current neighbors and to meet our newest neighbors

⇒FOOD - FAMILY - FRIENDS - FUN - MORE FOOD⇐

"ADMISSION" = For each member of your family, bring a non-perishable food or personal care donation for the **Bedford Food Pantry**.
Suggestions: cereal, coffee, juice, pasta, peanut butter, soap, TP, toothpaste, toothbrushes, handcream, kleenex, tunafish, laundry detergent, dish detergent, shampoo, rice, crackers

BRING for YOURSELF/FAMILY:

Chairs Beverages/cooler camera bikes/toys/bubbles
Utensils and plates will be provided. ***No dogs please.***

When you RSVP, please indicate what food you are bringing to share:

- ★ENTRÉE TYPE DISH
- ★SALADS / SIDE DISH/ APPETIZER
- ★FRUIT / DESSERT

*?WHO HAS A FOLDING TABLE TO DONATE? We need tables to put the food on!
?WHO HAS A PRIZE TO DONATE TO THE NON-CASH DRAWING?
Let us know when you RSVP.*

**Please RSVP Joan Turnberg or Joel Parks @ (781)223-8555 or
joan.turnberg@verizon.net
by Monday, September 3, 2007**

If you leave a message, indicate what food item you are bringing and the number of people coming.

1999 BLOCK PARTY - FIND SOMEONE WHO.....

(of course, your responses should not be the name of someone who lives in your house.)

1. has the same color hair as you do _____
2. is wearing yellow
(What color eyes do they have?) _____
3. went to the Block Party last year _____
4. speaks a language other than English _____
5. has been/ will be going on vacation (where?) _____
6. is employed by the Town of Bedford _____
7. is on a town committee or town board _____
8. has used the Minuteman Bike Path _____
9. takes karate _____
10. has lived in the neighborhood for less than 3 years _____
11. drives a mini-van _____
12. has been to the movies in the past 3 months
(What did he/she see?) _____
13. lives in a white house
(What is his/her favorite local restaurant?) _____
14. has lived in the neighborhood more than 20 years _____
15. who is going to Bedford Day _____
16. is in the Girl Scouts or Boy Scouts _____
17. has grandchildren (how many?) _____
18. has a pet _____
19. likes anchovies _____
20. is/ or has a child in the Davis School _____

AFTER YOU HAVE COMPLETED THE FORM, FILL OUT YOUR NAME & ADDRESS BELOW. TEAR OFF BELOW THE DOTTED LINES AND PUT YOUR ENTRY INTO THE RAFFLE BOX. RAFFLE IS AT 4:30PM.

NAME: _____ ADDRESS: _____

LIDO-LEDGEWOOD BLOCK PARTY CHECKLIST

YEAR _____

TO DO

- Create and distribute "Save the Date" flyer in May/June
- Create and distribute Block Party flyer with details in August
- Create "Find Someone Who" activity
- Create "Who Are You?" table sign
- Create "Raffle tickets"
- Check stock of utensils/ plates
- Call and follow-up with neighborhood
- Circulate Block Party list of attendees

TO BRING

- markers
- nametags
- camera
- trash bags/ barrel
- sign-in clipboard & paper
- gift certificates/ prizes
- folding table
- tape
- plastic wrap/alum foil
- Wet Ones
- utensils/ plates
- cooler w/ beverages
- table cloth
- sidewalk chalk/ bubbles
- paper/plastic bags for Bedford Pantry donations
- Raffle box
- Camping chairs
- drinks /water

VOLUNTEER TABLES

FOOD

APPETIZERS/ FINGERFOOD

ENTREES

SIDES/ SALADS

DESSERTS
