

SERVE BLOCK PARTY

Block Party Planning Tool

Prepared for Buff | Tim Morris, Restored Church

A working checklist for team meetings. Not every item is required — it's a thinking framework built from what worked at Restored Church's Coal Street Park block party (~17 partners, ~2,000 attendees, ~\$5,872 total cost, 9-month runway, 48 volunteers, 20 professions of faith).

1. Core Philosophy (decide this first)

- Are we the centerpiece or are we platforming others? (Strongly recommend the latter.)
- Will everything be free? (Removes any transactional feel.)
- What's the one sentence we want partners and attendees to walk away saying about us?
- Which of our OWN ministries can we move to the party for cross-exposure? (e.g., Restored moved their monthly food distribution on-site and gave away 1,000 boxes.)

2. Timeline

- Start ~9 months out — anything less and partner recruitment gets rushed
- Partner commitments locked: 3 months out
- Postcards printed: 2 months out
- Volunteer roles assigned: 1 month out
- Vendor gift bags assembled: day before

3. Venue

- Choose for proximity to the people you want to reach, not convenience
- Size: can it hold your target attendance plus vendor tents, inflatables, and a kids zone?
- Permits / city approval (often donated if you ask)
- Parking and pedestrian access
- Power access (for DJ, inflatables, food prep)
- Shade / tree cover
- On-site bathhouses or bathrooms the city will open for you — ask first

4. Logistics Must-Haves

- Bathrooms — porta-johns or city-opened facilities (often the #1 oversight)
- Water / hydration station — central, branded, hosted by your team
- Food plan — who provides, who serves, allergy signage
- Trash, recycling, cleanup crew
- First aid station / paramedic presence
- Weather contingency — rain date or rain plan
- Security — invite police to attend; their presence is free and welcomed
- Insurance / liability coverage
- Setup and tear-down crews with clear times and leads

5. Budget Benchmark

- Restored's total all-in: \$5,871.65 (bubbles/DJ, inflatables rental, bike purchases, printing, food, supplies, gift bags)
- City permits were donated — ask the city early
- Partners bring their own giveaways and handouts — budget doesn't need to cover them

6. Partner Recruitment (start 2–3 months out minimum)

City Services to Invite

- Police (squad car, K9 if available)
- Fire department (engine, let kids engage)
- Paramedics / EMS
- Health department (screenings)
- Mayor's office / city council

Community Non-Profits (examples from our event)

- Local community action agency (e.g., CEO)
- Regional food bank (e.g., Weinberg)
- Counseling centers
- Health system outreach programs (e.g., AmeriHealth, Free 2 Be Mom via Geisinger)
- Career Link / workforce development
- Victims Resource Center
- Recovery / Pathways-type ministries

Gospel-Centered Partners

- Crisis pregnancy center
- Christian adoption / family services (e.g., Bethany)
- Disaster relief arms of denomination (e.g., BRN Disaster Relief)
- Salvation Army
- Other gospel-preaching churches in the city — invite them to have a table
- Prayer team / evangelism partner with a tent, Bibles, and gospel conversations — most of our 20 professions of faith happened here

7. Kid Draw (do not skimp)

- Inflatables / obstacle courses (6–10)
- Bubble company or similar spectacle — place upwind of the field
- DJ / music
- Bike rodeo + bike giveaway (if donations are available)
- Face painting, snow cones, candy from vendors
- Table-top games area

8. Friday Feeder Events

- List every Serve project happening Friday; give each one a stack of invites
- Build at least one Friday project that produces something used on Saturday (bike rehab → bike rodeo)
- Saturday-morning neighborhood cleanup that ends at the block party

9. Promotion

- Postcard-sized invites printed 2 months out
- Distribute through every partner's network — they become your promotion multiplier
- Social media + church channels
- Local newspapers, TV, radio
- Door hangers in surrounding blocks
- School flyers where possible

10. Vendor Hospitality (the detail that punches above its weight)

- Gift bags assembled the day before
- Delivered by a dedicated 2–3 person team in the first 30 minutes
- Include: cold water, snacks, small gift, church info card
- Ask every vendor: 'Do you have everything you need?'
- Include police, fire, and paramedics in the gift-bag rounds

11. Staffing & Flow

- Plan for ~48 volunteers across Friday + Saturday
- Event Director (one person, final call)
- Partner Liaison (welcomes vendors, troubleshoots)
- Kids Zone Lead
- Hydration Tent Lead
- Setup Lead / Tear-Down Lead
- Gift Bag Team Lead
- Prayer Tent / Gospel Conversation Lead
- Photographer / social media capture
- Trash and cleanup rotation

12. Site Layout Principles

- Central anchor: hydration tent in the middle of the field — becomes the gravity center
- Bubbles placed upwind so they drift across the whole party
- Inflatables / kids zone off to one side in open space
- Prayer tent on a high-traffic edge (where it's most effective for gospel conversations)
- Vendors in a horseshoe arc facing the main flow
- Food / distribution stations near the entry point to pull people in

13. Measuring Win

- Total attendance (headcount or clicker)
- Number of partners represented
- Gospel conversations and professions of faith
- New relational connections with city officials and partners
- Follow-up leads (connect cards, prayer requests)

14. Follow-Up (don't skip)

- Thank-you notes to every partner within one week
- Photo recap sent to partners and media
- Debrief with core team within 10 days
- Personal follow-up with every gospel conversation

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