



Baltimore City Play Streets Program: Organizer Guide

This Play Streets Organizer Guide provides information about play streets for program applicants and volunteers.

In this guide, you will find:

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2. Where can a Play Street take place?
3. When can a Play Street take place?
4. How do you host a play street?
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What is a Play Street?

A Play Street is a temporary transformation of a city street into a dedicated space for children to play. Play Streets are organized by volunteers with permission and support from the Baltimore City Department of Transportation (BCDOT). The Department of Transportation provides a block party permit for multiple Play Streets dates and physical barriers that can be temporarily placed at each end of a residential block to traffic. Children and neighbors of all ages can use the temporarily-closed street as a safe place to play games, ride bikes, and spend time together.



Figure 1 Philadelphia Play Streets, “Play streets” bring summer camp atmosphere to neighborhoods,” Ken McFarlane and Sahar Coston-Hardy/Philadelphia Parks & Recreation, Youth Today

Where can a Play Street take place?

When you are thinking about where to host a Play Street, think about blocks where families with children live, where children play outside, and where neighbors want to host a play street. Similar to a Block Party, any block with a bus route, designated truck or emergency route, or metered parking can *not* be used for a Play Street.

- A map of Truck Routes can be found [here](#).
- A map of Emergency Routes can be found [here](#)
- A map of bus routes can be found here:
 - [MTA Bus Routes](#)
 - [Charm City Circulator Routes](#)



When can a Play Street take place?

Play Streets work best when they happen on a regular schedule over a few weeks or months (up to three months per application), allowing neighbors to learn about them and plan to join over time. Generally, weekend mornings or afternoons work well for Play Streets because children are not in school and streets can be closed with less inconvenience for neighbors.

For example, you could host a Play Street every Saturday from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. in August, or every other Sunday from 2:00 to 4:00 pm for two months in the spring.



Figure 2 Play Streets, City of Cambridge, MA



How do you host a play street?

The most important tasks for organizers and volunteers are:

- Submitting and getting an approved Block Party permit for a Play Street, and complying with the rules of the permit (fulfill all requirements provided in the permit application)
- Scheduling the Play Street
- Planning activities and bringing supplies
- Inviting neighbors and answering any questions
- Hosting a safe and fun Play Street
- Cleaning up after the event

Volunteer organizers bring games, activities, or other supplies to facilitate play. BCDOT is able to provide a limited number of Play Kits each season for applicants on a first-come first-served basis. Play Kits are boxes of play equipment such as chalk, jump ropes, hula hoops, and other games for use during the Play Streets events.

Each Play Street event should include two to four organizers to share the work and the fun of hosting these events. One required role is the Safety Captain:

Safety Captain (required role) and Safety Monitors

The Safety Captain recruits volunteer “safety monitors” for Play Streets. The captain and monitors make sure that the barricades stay in place to prevent cars from driving into the street and make sure any Play Street rules are followed. They also make sure heavy objects are not placed in the middle of the street and fire hydrants are clear in case emergency vehicles need to drive onto the block.

Parents or guardians must be present to monitor their children as well.

Different volunteers may be involved before, during, and after the event. Organizers and volunteers should always meet after an event to talk about any problems and to plan for their next Play Street event.



Play Streets Tasks Checklist for Organizers

Organizing phase:

- ☐ Determine street location and identify an alternative, should there be an issue with the proposed location.
- ☐ Determined Date and Times for Recurring Play Streets Events
- ☐ Complete and submit the Play Streets Permit application on OpenGov (link below)
- ☐ Provide evidence of notification of all households on the block proposed for closure (use the Block Canvassing document provided in this document)
- ☐ Recruit and assign tasks/roles to volunteers
- ☐ Recruit a Safety Captain (see additional tasks below)
- ☐ Post BCDOT-provided street closure signs providing notice of the event at least 3 days before the planned Play Street
- ☐ Coordinate with BCDOT's Special Events division to obtain street barriers at the beginning of the Play Streets permit season (see list of BCDOT contacts for coordination)
- ☐ Promote the event through flyers, social media, and/or word of mouth
- ☐ Identify a safe place for storing the street barriers throughout the Play Streets season
- ☐ If organizers are receiving a Baltimore City DOT Play Kit, ensure that attendees return equipment after the event and store (or make a plan to store) the Play Kit for the season
- ☐ Organize a list of potential activities and create a plan for:
 - What types of activities, games, or programs should be included?
 - What supplies or equipment is needed and available?
- ☐ Optional: Make a plan for any extra amenities, such as bathroom access, food or snacks, music, electricity needs

During and after Play Streets Event

- ☐ Collect and store (or work with a volunteer to store) any equipment after the event
- ☐ Debrief with volunteers after the event to determine what went well and areas of improvement
- ☐ Return street barriers at the end of the season (see list of BCDOT contacts for coordination)



Safety Captain Checklist

Organizing phase:

- ☐ Sign the Safety Captain Agreement provided in this document.
- ☐ Recruit Safety Monitor volunteers to help during Play Street events
- ☐ Determine “watch zones” where volunteers will be stationed to monitor for safety issues
- ☐ Determine a safety exit plan with other volunteers in case of an emergency (e.g. an ambulance needing immediate access to the block)
- ☐ Make a plan for any drivers who need to enter or exit the block

During and after the event:

- ☐ Ensure that barricades are in place at the start of the event
- ☐ Remove and store (or work with a volunteer to store) barricades at the end of the event



Baltimore City DOT Contacts and Resources

ROW Division, Special Events Division (for Permit and Street Barriers):

- Permit application:
<https://baltimoremddot.portal.opengov.com/categories/1081/record-types/6428>
- Email: specialevents@baltimorecity.gov
- Phone: (410) 396-1916
- Address: 401 E. Fayette Ave Baltimore, Maryland 21202
 - *Office hours:* Monday-Wednesday & Friday 8:30 AM - 4:30 PM, Thursday – Closed

Play Streets Kits, and other Play Streets questions or comments:

Mikah Zaslow, City Planner: mikah.zaslow@baltimorecity.gov or (443) 835-7904



Agreement: Play Streets Safety Captain

I, _____, will fulfil the duties of the Play Streets Safety Captain outlined in the Baltimore City Play Streets Program: Organizer Guide. This includes:

- Recruiting **Safety Monitors** to help during play street events
- Determining **watch zones** for volunteers to monitor
- Determining a **safety exit plan** with other volunteers in case of an emergency (e.g. an ambulance needing immediate access to the block).
- Putting barricades in place at the start of the event
- Monitoring the safety of the event with the Safety Monitors during the event, ensuring that:
 - The street barricades remain in place to prevent through-traffic from driving into the Play Street
 - Heavy objects are not placed in the middle of the street and fire hydrants are clear in case emergency vehicles need to arrive
- Making a plan for drivers of cars who need to enter or exit the block
 - This may include clearing the street of children and objects should any cars parked on the street need to exit during the event.
- Removing and storing (or making a plan to store with another volunteer) barricades at the end of the event
- Ensuring that the Play Street rules are being followed.

This role is critical to the safety of children and participants over the course of the Play Streets event(s).

Name (print clearly)

Phone number

Signature

Date



Sample Timeline

This is a sample timeline for play streets organizers hosting four bi-weekly play street events during summer 2027. Play Streets can occur during the summer, fall or spring.

Phase	Date	Task
Organizing	March	Recruit and form organizing team. Assign roles and deadlines.
	April	Canvass Play Street block to notify residents
	May 15	Apply for permit from DOT
	May 31 - June 4	DOT approves Play Street permit
	June 5-24	Promote Play Street events online and in-person, and print signs as needed
	June 25	Organizers obtain barriers
Hosting event	June 26	Host Play Street (1 of 4)
	July 7	Canvass block and re-post signage
	July 10	Host Play Street (2 of 4)
	July 21	Canvass block and re-post signage
	July 24	Play Street (3 of 4)
	August 4	Canvass block and re-post signage
	August 7	Play Street (4 of 4)
Season wrap-up	August 10-31	Host debrief meeting with organizers Return traffic barriers and Play Kit to BCDOT



Block canvassing for resident notification of event

	Name	Email	Phone number	Address
	<i>Nombre</i>	<i>Correo electrónico</i>	<i>Número de teléfono</i>	<i>Dirección</i>
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Image Resource List:

Figure 1: Philadelphia Play Streets, “Play streets” bring summer camp atmosphere to neighborhoods,” Ken McFarlane and Sahar Coston-Hardy/Philadelphia Parks & Recreation, Youth Today <https://youthtoday.org/2021/07/play-streets-bring-summer-camp-atmosphere-to-neighborhoods/>

Figure 2: Play Streets, City of Cambridge, MA
<https://www.cambridgema.gov/Departments/communitydevelopment/publicspacelab/playstreets>