



BLOCK PARTY FOR DEMOCRACY

A Hosting Guide for Community Organizers

Presented by See U Next 2sday

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1. Overview & Mission

A Block Party for Democracy is a free, family-friendly community gathering designed to celebrate civic life, spark creativity, and invite neighbors to imagine the future of our democracy together — through art, conversation, music, food, and play.

These events are inclusive, non-partisan, and rooted in a simple belief: healthy democracies are built by engaged people who feel connected to their communities and to each other. We recommend that an event last 3 hours with time before and after for setup and cleanup.

Core Goals

- Bring people together across generations and backgrounds
- Create space for civic expression through hands-on art activities
- Make participation in democracy feel joyful and accessible
- Build community pride and a sense of shared ownership over public life
- Tone: Joyful, participatory, creative, family-friendly

Who Is This Guide For?

This guide is for any individual, neighborhood group, school, library, arts organization, or civic club interested in hosting their own Block Party for Democracy. You don't need to be an expert event planner. You need enthusiasm, a few good volunteers, and a willingness to invite your community to show up.

2. Planning Phases

Every event is different. Use the phases below as a framework and adjust based on your community's needs and available capacity. The phases are intentionally flexible — some groups will move quickly, others will have more time to build.

Phase	Key Tasks
Phase 1 Foundation	Confirm venue and date. Set a rain date. Identify your organizing team and core leads. Notify local partners and community groups. Determine your activity lineup and food plan.
Phase 2 Building	Recruit volunteers and assign roles. Begin collecting supplies and donations. Secure performers and activity leads. Create your event listing and prepare promotional materials.
Phase 3 Promotion	Launch social media promotion. Distribute flyers. Drive RSVPs and word-of-mouth outreach. Share activity previews and highlight partners.
Week Of	Confirm all volunteers and their roles. Do a final supply inventory. Prepare printed materials (activity prompts, signage, instructions). Brief your team.
Day Before	Pre-stage supplies and equipment. Confirm venue access and electricity. Charge any portable audio equipment. Do a final volunteer check-in.
Day Of	Arrive 90–120 minutes early. Set up stations before guests arrive. Brief all volunteers on their roles. Capture photos and video. Have fun!
After the Event	Thank volunteers and partners. Post photos and a recap. Collect and preserve any participant-created work. Document what went well and what to change next time.

3. Venue & Logistics

Choosing a Location

The ideal venue is accessible, visible, and already part of your community's daily life. Strong options include:

- Public parks with open green space and picnic areas
- Community centers or recreation areas
- School grounds or playgrounds (evenings and weekends)
- Library plazas or outdoor common areas
- Houses of worship with fellowship halls or outdoor grounds
- Neighborhood commercial streets or parking lots (with permits)

Look for locations with natural foot traffic, accessible parking, and room for multiple activity stations. Shade is a plus for summer events. If hosting indoors, a large open hall works well — the activities translate seamlessly from outdoor to indoor settings.

Permits & Approvals

Requirements vary by municipality. Start this process during Phase 1.

Common Permit Needs — Check With Your Local Government

- Park use permit or special event permit
- Amplified sound / noise ordinance variance
- Food service permit (if serving food beyond potluck contributions)
- Temporary signage permit

Electricity & Infrastructure

Confirm early whether your venue has electrical access.

- Gazebos, park pavilions, and recreation buildings often have outlets
- If no power is available, a battery-powered PA system works well for smaller gatherings
- Bring long extension cords (25–50 ft) even if outlets are available — they're often in inconvenient spots
- Label cords and tape them down to prevent trip hazards

Layout & Station Placement

Spreading stations across your space keeps foot traffic moving and prevents crowding. A few principles that work well:

- Place your welcome/info table at the main entrance so every guest passes through it
- Put noisier activities at one end
- Put quieter art and writing activities in a calmer zone
- Food area works best centrally located, near picnic tables if available
- Reserve a clear, visible spot for any performance or music
- Post directional signage at decision points so guests can navigate independently
- Make signs for each activity station to help guests identify the activity

Setting a Date & Rain Date

Set a date and a rain date and communicate both dates prominently in all promotions.

Make a clear decision protocol: who decides whether to move to the rain date, and by when? Communicate any cancellation or shift at least 24 hours in advance.

4. Activities & Programming

The heart of a Block Party for Democracy is its activities. The best lineup mixes hands-on art-making, interactive games, civic expression, and entertainment — with something for every age. Below are the activities we've developed and tested. Not every event needs all of them — choose the mix that fits your space, volunteers, and community.

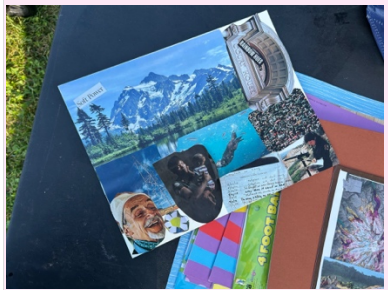
Activity Directory

	Activity	Description
	Dogs for Democracy	Participants decorate bandanas or signs to show off their pet's civic pride. For bandanas, you will need bandana material and fabric markers — you can also embellish with jewels using fabric glue. For wearable signs, take two sheets of cardstock in an appropriate size, decorate both sides with markers, colored pencils, or paint, then use a hole punch to make holes and thread string through them so the sign can rest comfortably over your dog's back. Add a pet selfie booth to make it extra special. Requires a designated outdoor area and a dog-comfortable activity lead.
	Democracy Learning Games	Democracy Lab (a group of Cleveland school teachers) developed a series of hands-on, game-show style civics and history activities (Jeopardy, Wheel of Fortune) hosted by facilitators. Guests play games and win "Democracy Dollars" they turn in for prizes of their choosing. Fun for all ages with prizes. Works best with an energetic host and donated prize items. If you would like to speak with someone from Democracy Lab to find out more or to inquire if they can partner with your event, please email us at info@next2sday.com and we will connect you.



The Democracy I Want Chalk 'Wall'

Participants write, draw, or doodle their response to the prompt "The Democracy I Want..." on 2'x4' gray translucent polycarbonate greenhouse panels (amazon.com/dp/B0G6JZK685) using acrylic paint markers. The panels can be deployed several ways: on individual easels, mounted to a wall with removable adhesive strips (like 3M Command Poster Strips), or connected together into a freestanding prism or square column using cable velcro threaded through small drilled holes near the top, middle, and bottom of each panel (string works too, but is not as sturdy). A low-maintenance activity once set up and consistently one of the most popular at every event.



The People's Assembly Community Art Piece

A collaborative collage/art project where participants contribute a page with their hopes, demands, or visions for democracy. Pages are assembled into a collective artwork that travels to future events. You can assemble the pieces together to form a book or banner which makes an effective visual for other events, or visits to the offices of elected officials. If you'd like to donate the finished pieces you collect to our collection please email us at info@next2sday.com to make arrangements.



Civic All-Star Trophies

Collect old trophies and cover the plaques with gold or silver mailing labels. Before applying the labels, print fun sayings on them (i.e., #1 Consistent Voter, Driver of Positive Change, MVP Democracy All Star Team, etc.). If you'd like help with other fun phrases, or if you'd like us to send you a PDF for the labels we have done in the past, please email us at info@next2sday.com. Place trophies on a table and let participants choose a trophy that reflects their civic role. Pairs naturally with the Hero of Democracy Selfie Booth.



Hero of Democracy Selfie Booth

A backdrop with props (gold medals, capes, flags, trophies) for participants to strike their best democracy pose and share on social media. Easy to set up and consistently fun. Ask people to post their photos with the hashtag #BlockPartyForDemocracy.



Super Citizen Kids League

Kids answer a short Civic Duty Quiz, recite the Superhero Oath with a volunteer, and receive a superhero cape and button. Capes are made from patriotic-themed plastic tablecloths: cut an approximately 2–2.5' x 3–3.5' rectangle, then cut in about 1.5" at one end and cut out an oval or circle for the neck opening so it can be tied on like a cape. If you have access to a button maker, making special kid-friendly superhero buttons adds a lot to the fun — and if you need pre-made designs to get started, reach out to us at info@next2sday.com. Needs an enthusiastic activity lead.



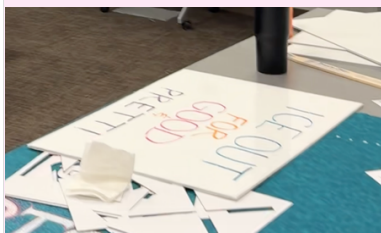
Protest Sign Free Library

A lending library of donated protest signs. Encourage people to bring signs they are no longer using. Participants borrow or take a sign to use at a future action. If your organization holds regular meetings, ask participants to sign the back with the date and name of the event where they used it, then return it at a future meeting so it can inspire others again.



Flags of Change

Participants create their own small flag — think retro college pennant style — to reflect their values, hopes, and civic pride. Ahead of time make the flags from an approximately 14.5" piece of thick cotton fabric (we typically use dark blue) with one end wrapped and glued around an 18" wooden dowel. Cutting the edges of the fabric with decorative edging shears gives the flags a fun, finished look. Pre-made black-and-white paper templates with civic phrases and images make the activity more accessible. Participants then cut shapes and letters from colorful felt (we typically use white and red) and glue them onto one or both sides of the flag using Elmer's glue. Participants pin the template of their choosing to the felt with straight pins, and trim around the edges to cut the felt shape underneath. Don't forget the straight pins — they're essential for this one.



Make & Take Yard Signs

Participants upcycle old yard signs or coroplast panels, or decorate new ones with their own civic message, then take them home. Cover old signs with opaque vinyl, adhesive whiteboard material, adhesive chalkboard material, or opaque contact paper (trim as needed) to create a fresh surface. Decorate with permanent markers, Sharpies, paint, stickers, and more. Letter stencils are especially helpful for this one.



Signs of the Times

A variation on Make & Take Yard Signs. Using the same base material, cover it with adhesive whiteboard material (trim as needed) and decorate using dry erase markers. To make it weather resistant, spray with a strong aerosol hairspray — several coats, allowing each to dry thoroughly between applications — which can later be washed off with warm water and soap when ready to change the message. An alternative approach is to cover the finished piece with clear contact paper, which can be removed when it's time for a new message and the marker wiped off with soap and water. These signs can be updated and re-used for any event or occasion, or used as a protest sign by attaching a handle.



Democracy Playground

A kids' zone with bubbles (machines + giveaway bottles), noisemakers, simple outdoor games (consider adding a civic twist), and face painting. Needs 2–3 volunteers to keep it energized.

Optional Additions to Consider

- Music — live music or singing groups that lead participants in song is a great addition to these events
- Voter registration / registration check station
- Balloon artist (animals, flowers, sculptures)
- Collaborative group drawing (imagining a hopeful future city)
- Local food truck or coffee vendor
- ASL interpreter for general program accessibility

5. Volunteer Roles & Team Structure

A well-organized volunteer team is the difference between a chaotic day and a smooth, joyful event. Below are the core roles. For a smaller event, one person can cover two adjacent roles — but avoid spreading any individual too thin.

Role	Responsibilities	# Needed
Event Lead / Coordinator	Overall point person(s). Makes real-time decisions, manages the schedule, communicates with venue contact, handles unexpected issues. Should not be anchored to any one activity station.	1–2
Setup & Teardown Crew	Arrives early to arrange tables, chairs, tents, signage, and activity stations. Stays late for breakdown and cleanup.	3–5
Welcome / Info Table	First point of contact for guests. Greets everyone, answers questions, distributes buttons or giveaways, and directs guests toward activities. Staffed throughout the event.	1–2
Activity Station Leads	Each major activity station needs one dedicated person anchoring it — facilitating, explaining, and keeping supplies stocked. See Section 4 for per-activity volunteer needs.	1 per station
Performer & Entertainment Liaison	Coordinates with musicians, performers, and Democracy Lab facilitators. Manages the performance schedule, helps with setup, and gives introductions.	1–2
Food & Beverage Coordinator	Manages the potluck table or food area, water distribution, vendor coordination, and food area cleanup.	1–2
Social Media / Documentation	Takes photos and video throughout the event. Posts in real time or shortly after. Coordinates consent for photos, especially of minors.	1–2
Floater / General Support	Moves around the event filling gaps, restocking supplies, and backing up any station that needs help.	1–2

6. Supply Lists

Use these lists as a starting point. Customize based on your activity lineup and available resources. Many items can be donated by partner organizations or community members — put out a specific ask list early.

General Event Supplies

Infrastructure	Comfort & Misc
Tables (6–8 ft folding)	First aid kit
Folding chairs	Hand sanitizer
Tents or canopies	Bottled water (for volunteers)
Table coverings	Sunscreen (for outdoor events)
Trash & recycling bins	Backup trash bags
Extension cords (25–50 ft)	Sharpie markers (various)
Power strip(s)	Scissors
Duct tape / gaffer tape	Packing tape
Zip ties & bungee cords	Portable dolly or cart

Signage & Wayfinding

- Large area-marker signs — one per station, mounted on stakes (outdoor), easels (indoor or outdoor), or affixed to the wall with removable adhesive strips such as 3M Command Poster Strips (indoor)
- Tabletop activity instruction signs (small tabletop easels work well)
- Directional signs pointing guests toward key areas
- Donation jars throughout the event with signs that include a QR code for digital payment (Venmo, Zelle, etc.)
- Event flyers or programs for welcome table handouts
- Stakes for posting signs in ground (bring a mallet or hammer)

Art & Activity Supplies

Art Stations	Interactive Experiences
Polycarbonate greenhouse panels (2'x4', gray/translucent)	Gold medal props
Acrylic paint markers (light colors work best on dark panels)	Patriotic-themed plastic tablecloths (for superhero capes)
Easels (tabletop + full-size)	Old trophies + gold/silver mailing labels (for Civic All-Star)

Cardstock or mat board (8.5x11 or 8x10)	Selfie booth backdrop & props
Indelible markers	Fabric & fabric markers + fabric glue & jewels (for dog bandanas)
Acrylic paint & brushes	Cardstock + hole punch + string (for pet signs)
Colored pencils	Blank coroplast yard signs + yard stakes (12–15)
Glue sticks & scissors	Opaque vinyl / adhesive whiteboard or chalkboard material / contact paper (for sign covering)
Collage materials (magazines, scrap cloth, construction paper, stickers)	Rubbing alcohol (for prepping sign surfaces)

Flags of Change Supplies

- 18" wooden dowels
- Thick cotton fabric, approximately 14.5" per flag (dark blue recommended)
- Felt in multiple colors (white and red recommended)
- Decorative edging shears
- Elmer's glue
- Straight pins (essential — bring plenty)
- Black-and-white printed paper templates

Signs of the Times Supplies

- Adhesive whiteboard material
- Dry erase markers
- Strong aerosol hairspray (for weather resistance)
- Clear contact paper (alternative weather-resistance method)

Democracy Playground Supplies

- Bubble machines
- Bubble juice (bulk)
- Individual bubble bottles (for giveaways — attach a tag with your organization's QR code if possible)
- Hula hoops
- Plastic eggs + rice (for DIY noisemakers)
- Bin of instruments & noisemakers
- Face paint + brushes + water/wipes

Audio & Music

- PA system or powered speakers
- Microphone(s)
- Cables and adapters
- Backup battery-powered speaker (essential if venue power is uncertain)
- Playlist device with shared playlist ready for background music

Food & Beverage

Food Planning Options

POTLUCK — Ask attendees and partner organizations to bring a dish to share. Designate a food coordinator to track dishes and manage the table. Festive toothpicks and table decor make the food table feel like part of the event.

FOOD TRUCK — Invite a local food truck to park at the event. Confirm well in advance.

DONATED FOOD — Solicit donated food from local restaurants, grocery stores, or community organizations.

COMBINATION — A potluck table + a food truck or donated drinks is a popular hybrid that reduces organizer burden.

Regardless of approach: confirm who is bringing what, whether local health codes apply, and who is responsible for setup, monitoring, and cleanup of the food area.

7. Community Partners & Outreach

Partnering with local organizations strengthens your event, expands your reach, and distributes the workload. Start recruiting partners during Phase 1.

Types of Partners to Recruit

Civic & Community	Cultural & Specialized
Civic and democratic clubs	LGBTQ+ and identity-based orgs
Neighborhood associations	Immigration rights groups
Voter registration groups	Environmental groups
Libraries and schools	Health and social service orgs
Cultural and arts organizations	Youth-serving organizations
Houses of worship	Democracy education groups
Local businesses & food vendors	University departments (poli sci, art, etc.)

What to Ask of Partners

- Share event details with their email lists and social media followers
- Bring a table to connect with community members on the day
- Contribute to the potluck or bring supplies
- Provide volunteers for day-of support
- Contribute performers or activity leaders
- Help with promotion (flyers, word of mouth, event listings)

Tabling Guidelines for Partner Organizations

- If you want your event to be perceived as non-partisan, make sure tabling content is consistent with the spirit of the event
- Focus on civic participation, voter registration, and community issues
- Provide a standard table size for all tablers (6 ft folding is typical)

8. Communications & Promotion

Promotional Framework

Use the phases below as a guide. The goal is consistent presence leading up to the event, with frequency increasing as the date approaches.

- Early promotion: Announce the event. Share the date, location, and what to expect.
- Mid-run: Post activity or feature highlights. Generate excitement around specific elements. Recruit any remaining volunteers.
- Final push: Reminder posts with practical logistics (what to bring, parking, food plan). Volunteer and donor call if needed.
- Day of: Live updates, real-time photos, stories. Tag all partners.
- After: Recap post with photos. Thank participants and partners publicly.

Channels to Use

Social Media	Other Digital & Traditional
Facebook Event Page (public)	Email newsletter
Facebook Group (org members/partners)	Mobilize event listing
Instagram Feed + Stories	Tockify or other community calendars
TikTok (short video content)	Press release to local media
Threads	Printed flyers at local businesses, libraries, coffee shops
BlueSky	

Sample Hashtags

- #BlockPartyForDemocracy
- #DogsForDemocracy
- #SuperCitizenKidsLeague

Content Tips

- Behind-the-scenes setup content performs well — people love seeing events come together
- Short video walkthroughs of planned activities drive interest
- Faces and candid photos of organizers and volunteers outperform designed graphics
- “This Sunday!” and “Tomorrow!” posts reliably drive last-minute RSVPs
- Tag partners in all posts so they can reshare to their own audiences

- Chalk Brigade: recruit volunteers to chalk sidewalks in the area 1–2 days before the event for hyperlocal visibility

9. Day-Of Checklists

Setup (Arrive 90–120 Minutes Early)

Done?	Setup Tasks
☐	Confirm venue access and check in with venue staff or parks contact
☐	Walk the space — identify where each station will go before unloading
☐	Set up main tent / canopy and secure it
☐	Arrange tables and chairs for each activity station
☐	Run extension cords from power source; tape down all cords securely
☐	Set up PA system and test sound
☐	Lay out supplies for all activity stations
☐	Post directional and area signage (stakes for outdoor, easels for indoor)
☐	Set up welcome/info table with buttons, flyers, donation jar, and QR code
☐	Set up food/beverage area
☐	Brief all volunteers on their roles and the schedule before guests arrive
☐	Have organizer's phone charged and event contact list accessible

During the Event

Done?	During Event
☐	Greet incoming guests and direct them toward activities
☐	Monitor each station — restock supplies as needed
☐	Stick to the entertainment / music schedule (adjust in real time as needed)
☐	Capture photos and video for social media throughout the event
☐	Monitor weather for outdoor events — have a rain plan ready
☐	Check food area periodically — keep table clean and food covered
☐	Check in with all volunteers midway through
☐	Collect participant-created work (chalk boards, People's Assembly pages) before breakdown

☐	Announce end time 30 minutes before wrap-up
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Breakdown & Wrap-Up

Done?	Breakdown
☐	Thank all participants as they leave
☐	Collect all event materials and participant-created work
☐	Break down all tables, chairs, tents
☐	Remove all signage and decorations
☐	Clean the venue space — leave it better than you found it
☐	Return or secure any borrowed equipment
☐	Debrief quickly with your core volunteer team
☐	Post a social media thank-you or recap photo
☐	Send thank-you messages to key volunteers, performers, and partners
☐	Document what went well and what to change next time

10. Activity Instructions & Prompts

The following are ready-to-use instructions and prompts for activity station signage. These can be printed and placed at each station, or adapted for larger poster-size signs.

Super Citizen Kids League

Civic Duty Quiz (ask kids these questions)

- Do you promise to use your powers to be kind and respectful?
- Do you promise to stand up for what is fair?
- Do you promise to work with others to help your community?
- Do you promise that when you turn 18, you will vote in every election?

Superhero Oath (kids repeat after the activity lead and receive their cape and button at the end)

- I am a Super Citizen Kid.
- I will use my powers to be kind and fair.
- I will stand up for people who need protection the most.
- I will help my community and protect democracy.

"You are now part of The Super Citizen Kids League!"

The Democracy I Want Chalk 'Wall' — Instructions

- Pick up a paint marker.
- Finish the sentence: "The Democracy I Want..."
- In your own words, share your dreams for our country's future.
- Step back and see how your voice connects with others.

The People's Assembly — Prompts

Vision-Focused

- What do you dream our democracy could look like?
- If you could write one law to make life better, what would it be?
- What kind of country do you want your children or grandchildren to live in?
- Draw or write what a better democracy looks like.

Leader-Focused

- What is one quality every elected leader should have?
- If you could tell your representative one thing, what would it be?
- What do you wish politicians would listen to more carefully?
- What's one thing you wish your leaders would finally listen to?

Values-Based

- What makes you proud to be part of your community?
- What injustice do you want to see changed?
- What do you want to protect for the next generation?
- What does freedom mean to you?

Make & Take Yard Signs — Prompts

- “I stand for...” (fairness, kindness, equality, justice, etc.)
- “My vote is my...” (voice, power, superpower, right, etc.)
- “Democracy grows when...” (people vote, neighbors care, voices are heard, etc.)
- “In this house we believe...”
- “A good citizen is...”
- “Together we can...”
- Draw a superhero symbol for democracy (shield, cape, star, torch, etc.)
- Create your own “All-Star Citizen” award sign

Dogs for Democracy — Participant Guidelines

- You are responsible for your dog. Make sure they’re friendly, comfortable in public, and supervised at all times.
- Leashes required at all times.
- Dogs must be up-to-date on vaccinations.
- Poop bags available on site — please use them.
- If a dog shows signs of aggression, the dog and its companions will be asked to leave.
- Some people are afraid of dogs — please be mindful and give space to those who may be uncomfortable.
- All city ordinances regarding pets apply.

Civic All-Star Trophies — Instructions

- Choose a trophy that best matches your civic principles.
- Display it proudly — and help set an example for others.

Hero of Democracy Selfie Booth — Instructions

- Grab a prop that shows your civic pride — your Civic All-Star Trophy, a Flag for Change, or available props.
- Strike your proudest democracy hero pose.
- Share your photo using #BlockPartyForDemocracy and #ForTheLoveOfDemocracy.
- Inspire others to see themselves as everyday heroes of democracy, too!

11. Tips, Notes & Lessons Learned

Things That Work

- ✓ Start with more activities than you think you need — some won't land and that's okay
- ✓ Food is a magnet. Even a simple water station increases how long people stay.
- ✓ Have activity leads who are enthusiastic and engaging, not just present
- ✓ Make it beautiful — balloons, flags, and area signs matter for foot traffic and photos
- ✓ Real-time social posting drives late-arriving guests
- ✓ Kid-friendly activities keep families longer, which brings in more adults
- ✓ Donation jars with Venmo QR codes outperform cash-only collection
- ✓ Giveaways (bubbles, buttons) with your organization's QR code extend your reach beyond the event

Common Pitfalls to Avoid

- X Don't wait until the last minute to confirm food — this requires the most lead time
- X Don't assume electricity is available — always verify with the venue
- X Don't overload your volunteers — one person cannot run three stations
- X Don't forget a rain date and a clear decision protocol on when to make the call
- X Don't forget to document the event — photos and video are essential for future promotion

On Non-Partisan Framing

While not required, these events invite more people “in” when framed as non-partisan. Language matters. Avoid phrases that read as politically coded for one side. Frame everything around the Constitution, civic participation, community, and “We The People.”

In this instance, the goal is for people across political backgrounds to feel genuinely welcome — and for the event to be about the shared values that make civic life possible, not about any particular party or candidate.

Questions? Connect With Us.

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