

4 ITEMS FOR YOUR COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION PARTY CHECKLIST

Block parties, cookouts, and outdoor social activities in condominium, homeowner (HOA), and townhome associations can bring residents together. These events can strengthen community bonds and provide a great opportunity for board members to meet and connect with fellow neighbors. If you're not sure how to create a successful, well-attended event with minimized risk, below are three checklist items to keep in mind.

1. Permits // Checking local permit requirements is a great place to start when planning an association party. Closing off a residential street can involve working with the appropriate municipality, and in some cases, adjacent residential and/or commercial properties. Additionally, some municipalities may require food or tent permits.

Local officials can coordinate with community association leaders and property managers to determine the best location for the party. This can involve providing proper notice, accessibility requirements, creating signage, supplying barricades to block off traffic, and notifying law enforcement authorities.

2. Budgeting // Like any other association expense, planning and budgeting are critical. A few questions to ask:

- Does your association have an existing events budget?
- Are there funding gaps in this year's events budget?
- Does the association need to charge attendees to cover costs?
- Is advance fundraising needed?

Partnering with vendors can also assist in cutting down the party's budget and organization. Some companies may offer to assist in sponsoring an event if they can advertise or assist in the event planning.

3. Insurance Coverage // When it comes to association events, there are many options to consider that are fun for adults, children, and families. However, the association must be aware of potential liabilities and proper insurance coverage.

For example, if your association is considering renting a bouncy house for kids, there are a handful of liability exposures if it is set-up on common elements or areas.

- Who is going to rent the bouncy house, supervise its use, and enforce the rules (ex. height and weight limits)?
- If there are injuries, what is the potential exposure to the resident who rented the bouncy house?
- Can board members be held liable?

It's important to consult with the association's attorney regarding any potential risks, liabilities, and insurance coverage concerns when it comes to association events.

4. Serving Alcohol // Most states have a version of a "dram shop" law, which holds establishments accountable for serving minors or visibly intoxicated patrons of legal age who behave recklessly and injure someone because of their inebriated state. Although dram laws are typically associated with bars and restaurants, they can be applied to community associations as well.

Check with your association's legal counsel to see if they advise against serving alcohol at the association-sponsored event. ■■