



## HOW TO APPLY FOR A MMNY BLOCK PARTY

Updated on Feb. 16, 2012. Send questions to [aaron@makemusicny.org](mailto:aaron@makemusicny.org).

It's easy to close a street for Make Music New York. But it's often hard to figure out how. This document explains how the process works. Please read through this entire document carefully, follow these 8 steps, and your street closure will be approved!

### **Step 1: Choose a block.**

First, decide which block you want to close for Thursday, June 21st. Keep the following guidelines in mind:

- Only single blocks may be closed; the City has a moratorium on new multi-block closures.
- Small side streets are more likely to be approved for closure than big thoroughfares (like Broadway, Queens Boulevard, Atlantic Avenue...).
- Don't choose a block that would require rerouting a bus line.
- Avoid blocks with parking garages that would become inaccessible if you closed the street (unless it's OK with the garage owner)
- Avoid blocks with firehouses, hospitals, senior centers, or funeral homes.
- If there are churches or schools on the block that will be in session, you must get approval from them first, before closing the block. (Ask them to sponsor the event!)

### **Step 2: Find a sponsoring organization.**

In order to close a street, we need to work with a local nonprofit or community based organization that will agree to "sponsor" the block party. This organization must have an indigenous relationship with the block being closed, and must sign a form from the Street Activity Permit Office (below), saying that they take responsibility for the event.

Let's break that down.

- **The sponsoring organization must be a non-commercial enterprise.** Possible sponsors include schools, churches, soup kitchens, block associations, community centers, 501(c)(3) organizations, and Business Improvement Districts.
- **The sponsor needs to have a connection to the street being closed.** Maybe its offices are on that street, or just a block or two away. Maybe the sponsor is a nonprofit musical organization that sometimes performs in a club on that street, or rehearses around the corner. Maybe it's a school that uses the ballfields in the park next to the street. Any of these would be considered an "indigenous relationship" to the block.
- **The sponsor must submit a form to the Street Activity Permit Office,** taking responsibility for the event in case something goes wrong. Note that the City does not require that anyone show proof of insurance for a block party; most block associations don't have insurance, but they close blocks anyway and take their chances. Other organizations, like churches, schools, and established nonprofits, generally have insurance, and by signing the form, they're agreeing to use that policy in the case that someone gets hurt and files a lawsuit. Some organizations will call their insurance brokers to take out additional coverage to cover a block party.

New York City has over 6,500 nonprofit organizations, tens of thousands of houses of worship, 60 Business Improvement Districts, and countless schools. Most likely, you already know people who work for one of these organizations — you might call them up and say "I'm trying to put together a block party

for Make Music New York; would your organization be interested in having this on your street, and taking part in the event?”

Note: the City has determined that an organization can have an annual block party **and also** a Make Music New York block party, in the same year. Applying for one does not affect the application for the other.

### **Step 3: Decide on the sponsoring organization’s role.**

Option 1: The block party sponsor agrees to submit the form, and has no interest in doing anything else. As long as someone else is willing to take on the organizing work, that’s fine.

Option 2: The sponsor signs the form, and helps promote the event around the neighborhood in various ways. Perhaps they speak at a community board meeting (see below). Or they send invitations to all the neighbors, and to their members, telling them about the event. Otherwise, they stay out of the way.

Option 3: The sponsor takes an active role in the event itself, setting up tables with information about their organization, deciding who the performers will be, finding local vendors to serve food, etc. This is a great option, as long as live music remains the focus.

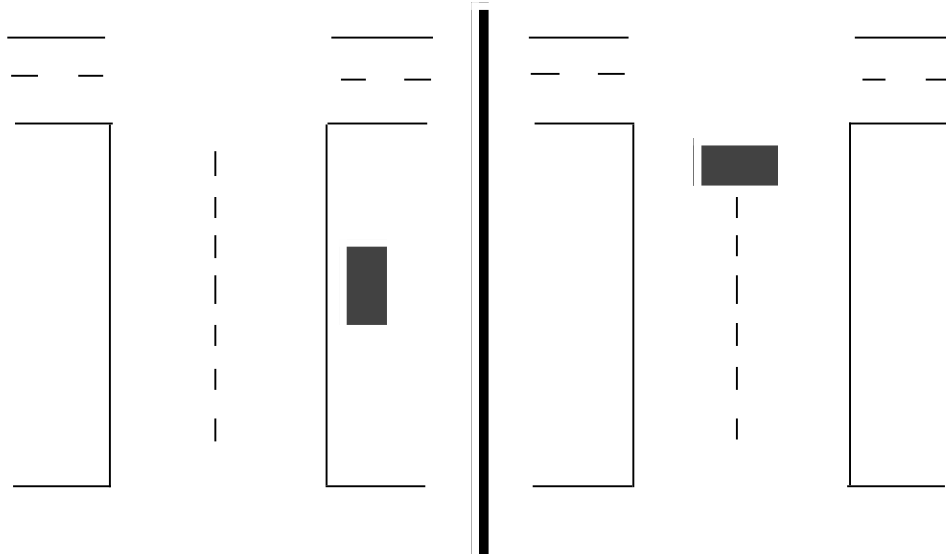
There are many possibilities — just be sure that everyone knows what they’re agreeing to do.

### **Step 4: Submit an application to SAPO by March 21st (or earlier — see below).**

Go to <https://nyceventpermits.nyc.gov/cems>, and submit an application to the Street Activity Permit Office form. **NOTE:** this application can no longer be submitted with a paper copy; it must be completed online.

- The “Applicant Name” should be the name of a contact person at the sponsoring organization. If you or someone else is actually organizing the event, list that person as the “Producer Name.”
- For the type of event, choose “Block Party.”
- Give yourself plenty of time to set up. The NYPD may need a couple of hours just to tow the cars that missed the “No Parking - Street Closure” signs and stayed parked on the street. It’s often easiest to close a street for the entire day, 9am to 9pm. Also, give yourself plenty of time to pack everything up and clean up after the event. Once a permit is approved, it’s almost impossible to extend the hours after the fact.
- Any stage higher than 24 inches must be approved by the fire department and Department of Buildings. To make it simple, keep the stage height low. Or maybe you don’t need a stage at all.
- You must leave at least one lane free for the use of emergency vehicles. If you have a stage set up, make sure that there’s enough room on one side for a vehicle to drive through. See diagram below.
- If you decide to power your equipment with a pole tap, you’ll need to hire a licensed electrician with the right credentials from the Department of Transportation. In the end, it’s much easier to rent a generator, or run extension cords if your power needs are minimal. See diagram below.
- Do not serve alcohol at the event. Your application will not be approved if you do.

If you have questions as you’re filling out the application, email us at [makemusicny@gmail.com](mailto:makemusicny@gmail.com).



Two options for stage placement.

*On the left:* Stage area is on the sidewalk, with audience in the street. Power can be provided from extension cords going into one of the buildings, or by a generator. The entire street is clear for emergency vehicles.

*On the right:* Stage area is in the center of the street, at one end, with audience in the street. Power is provided by a generator, or extension cords taped down to the street. At least one lane is clear for emergency vehicles (here, both parking lanes are clear).

**Step 5: Contact your local Community Board for approval.**

Once you've completed the SAPO form, the local community board must approve your application and send it to City Hall by April 21st.

**Each community board handles street closures differently.** Some of them will sign off on them, no questions asked. Others require you to speak in front of a particular committee, or in front of the full board at one of their monthly meetings, and present your plans. A few boards require you to show letters of support from neighbors or businesses on the block you plan to close. The only way to figure it out is to call up the community board and speak directly with the **District Manager**, and ask what to do.

In some community boards, street closure applications need to be put on the agenda for the March meeting in order to be processed by the City Hall deadline, which means in some cases **you must contact the board before March 1st.**

In the last four years, 42 groups have applied to community boards for MMNY street closures; every one that applied before the board's deadline was approved. Please contact your community board ASAP to find out how they handle street closure applications, and when their deadline is.

- Community board districts are not the same as City Council districts, or police precincts. To find out what community board your street closure is in, go to <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/lucds/cdstart.shtml>.
- Once you've identified the right board, look up the name and phone number of the District Manager here: <http://www.nyc.gov/html/cau/html/cb/directory.shtml>.
- If you need to speak in front of a committee, or the full board, ask someone from the sponsoring organization to come along with you.

- Most community boards want to make sure your event is not going to be another bland “street fair” selling tube socks and cotton candy. Make it clear that you’re proposing a community-based cultural event, involving local organizations and musicians.

### **Step 6: Once it’s approved, confirm that SAPO has received notice from the Community Board.**

At this point, SAPO should be in touch with you. If they aren’t, confirm that the Community Board has submitted an approval notice to SAPO.

### **Step 7: Ensure that all other permits are in order.**

Once SAPO receives your form, they will send copies around to the NYPD, the Fire Department, the Department of Sanitation, the Department of Transportation, the Department of Consumer Affairs (if you’re selling anything), and the Department of Buildings (if you are putting up a stage or other structure).

Each agency must approve your application. In some cases, they will ask you to apply for a separate permit for street vending, electrical pole taps, etc. The online system explains all of these permit requirements.

In rare cases, the NYPD or Department of Transportation may propose moving your event to an adjacent block, for safety or traffic flow reasons. If this occurs, you do *not* need to go back to the community board for approval — just make arrangements directly with the city agency, and notify SAPO.

### **Step 8: Pick up the approved SAPO permit, and bring it to Police Precinct, with a money order for \$45.**

When the process is finished, SAPO will issue your permit, sending it through the mail or as a PDF attachment in an email. Call the Community Affairs officer at your local police precinct, and make an appointment to come in. (He or she will already have seen your SAPO application, and will be expecting you.) Don’t wait until the last minute; come in at least two weeks before June 21st.

- Bring a copy of the approved SAPO permit, and a money order for \$45 for an amplified sound permit. They should be able to write up the sound permit for you while you wait.
- The precinct will give you “No Parking Tuesday” signs to post along the street before the event. You will need to post these signs yourself, beginning on Sunday, June 19th.
- Talk to the Community Affairs officer about when they will come with barricades to block off the street, and when they will come to tow cars (if necessary). Try to get the officer’s cell phone number, so you can call them on June 21st if there are any problems.

Unfortunately, we’ve found that the police precincts do not always bring barricades to block off the street, even when they say that they will. Have a backup plan ready in case they don’t show up — for instance, you could block the street with a parked car, or with orange cones.

That’s it!