

Play Street Pilot Proposal

What is a Play Street?

A Play Street is a neighborhood block that residents apply to temporarily close to car traffic and transform into a safe place where neighbors of all ages are free to gather and play. They are a fun and easy way to build community and get to know your neighbors. Play Street programs already exist in cities such as Seattle, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, New York City, and many countries throughout the world.

Overview of Current Process for Madison Block Party Permits:

Currently, Madison allows for Block Party permit requests. The process to obtain a one-time Block Party permit includes an application fee of \$50, a neighborhood petition that is signed by an adult resident/occupant of at least 75% of all residential and/or non-residential units on the street(s) for which closure is requested, and an application that ensures all requirements for closure are met. Play Streets could act as an extension of the current Madison Block Party permitting process, and the new permitting program could be rebranded as Block Party/Play Street. Larger events would continue to fall under the Street Use permitting process, which would remain unchanged.

<https://www.cityofmadison.com/specialevents/blockparties/>

Play Streets Pilot Proposal:

- What is being proposed:
 - We are proposing rolling out a pilot Play Streets program in these three neighborhoods:
 - Westmorland
 - Midvale Heights
 - Nakoma
 - The pilot would begin June 1, 2023, and end Oct. 1, 2023.
 - **Recurring permits:** The pilot would use the same permitting process as the existing Block Party permit but allow for the permit to be recurring. Residents applying for a Play Street permit under the pilot program could plan a recurring event in one location with a single application. For instance, every Friday from 5pm to 8pm during the months of June and July.
 - Two residents per Play Street will be named as “Barricade Monitors” and will ensure residents of the street and delivery vehicles can still access the street during the event.

- **Debrief:** At the end of the pilot program, organizers will meet with a few other neighborhoods to debrief the program. Assuming there will be support from other neighborhoods, organizers will request time to debrief about the program to city staff (and acknowledging neighborhood support) and review next steps to make the program available in every neighborhood in the city.
- When and Where: Starting June 1-October 1
 - Westmorland:
 - Clifton Drive and Birch Avenue
 - Midvale Heights
 - Piper Dr.; Block 600
 - Sundays, 6/18, 6/25, 7/9, 7/16 from 5-8 pm
 - Nakoma
 - 4200 & 4300 Blocks of Yuma Drive
 - Currently finalizing dates
- Who is Supporting Pilot:
 - Alder Bill Tishler is supporting this pilot.
 - Neighborhood associations from the three neighborhoods mentioned above (Westmorland, Midvale Heights, and Nakoma).
- Why Play Streets?
 - Play Streets are a safe way to empower residents throughout Madison to host their own community-building event in their neighborhood. By applying for a recurring permit, residents can increase both physical activity and engagement between neighbors in an easy and accessible way.
 - What does the research say?
 - Increase in physical activity:
 - Regular physical activity (PA) in youth helps build healthy bones and muscles, reduces anxiety and stress, increases self-esteem, and may improve blood pressure and cholesterol levels ([Janssen & LeBlanc, 2010](#)). Several studies show that children today play outside less than their parents did. Studies show that Play Street programs increase physical activity in children compared to weeks without a Play Street closure.
 - Developing social relationships and sense of community:
 - In a study looking at Play Street Programs in rural communities, many participants interviewed mentioned greater connection with neighbors and increased perception

of safety. <https://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/18/19/9976/htm>

- More safe places to play: While Madison has many parks and playgrounds throughout the city, there are neighborhoods where a park or playground is not within a 10-minute walk. Play Streets is another great way for neighborhoods with fewer options for physical activity to create spaces for children and adults to play in a safe way.

- Goals of the Play Street Program (easier, cheaper, repeatable):
 - Create an easier process for block parties
 - Allow this to be recurring, with one permit indicating frequency
 - Decrease costs for the permitting process
 - Encourage more community gatherings at a localized level

Appendix:

- Play Streets Program in Seattle WA
 - <https://www.seattle.gov/transportation/permits-and-services/permits/play-streets-and-block-parties>

References:

<https://bmcpublihealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-019-6609-4#:~:text=The%2ostudy%2oshowed%20that%20Play,and%20moderate%2Dto%2Dvigorous%20physical>

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9272023/>

<https://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/18/19/9976/htm>

https://journals.lww.com/jphmp/fulltext/2020/05000/examining_the_implementation_of_play_streets_a.19.aspx