

HOW TO DO A PLAY STREET

STEP BY STEP GUIDE FOR COMMUNITY
MEMBERS ORGANIZING THEIR OWN PLAY
STREET IN MIAMI, FL



PURPOSEFUL PARTNERSHIP

Strengthening resident’s ability to shape their community together is central to our values and work. Miami’s communities have very diverse needs, but they all strive for similar things: access and opportunities for growth and well-being, improved quality of life, safety, and connections.

Having the right partners is critical to achieving success with any of these goals. That is precisely why Urban Impact Lab started this work in Little Havana in partnership with ConnectFamilias and in Liberty City with the Miami Childrens Initiative. We owe much gratitude to the The Children’s Trust, whose generous support made this possible.

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WHAT ARE PLAY STREETS

MOST SIMPLY, PLAY STREETS IS A PROGRAM WHERE RESIDENTS WORK TOGETHER TO TEMPORARILY LIMIT AUTOMOBILE TRAFFIC ON ONE BLOCK OF A NORMAL NEIGHBORHOOD, RESIDENTIAL STREET SO CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES CAN PLAY, SOCIALIZE, AND ACTIVELY ENGAGE WITH THEIR COMMUNITY.

HISTORY OF PLAY STREETS

New York City established the first US Play Streets program in 1916. “By 1924, the program was expanded to the outer boroughs, with 50 Play Streets in Manhattan, The Bronx, Brooklyn and Queens. Today, designated Play Streets still continue to function across all 5 boroughs, giving kids the space they need to run and play.”¹

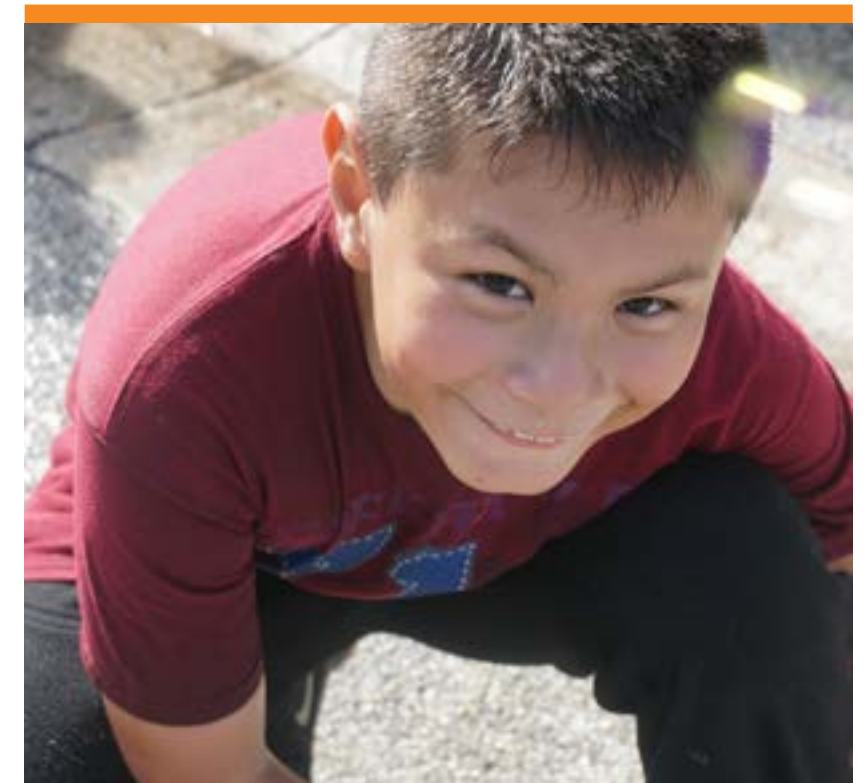
Since then, Play Streets have spread nationally and internationally with successful activities happening in Seattle, LA, London, and other cities.

WHY PLAY IN THE STREET?

The City of Miami has thousands of miles of roads. That equals thousands of miles of public space because streets are our most abundant and accessible public spaces in the city.

Many Miami residents do not have a park or green space in walking distance to their home. Many others don’t have backyards or shared play spaces.

Given these realities, the street is the most logical public space that can be used to keep our children active and healthy and our communities connected.



WHAT A PLAY STREET IS NOT

A Play Street is NOT a block party nor is it an event. There should be no tents, food carts, bounce houses, stages or similar structures. Block parties and events require many more permits and fees and are intended for larger crowds.

Remember, this is a smaller activity intended for the residents and families on and around a specific block.

¹ <http://www.thirteen.org/program-content/a-history-of-nycs-play-streets/>

I HAVE WONDERFUL CHILDHOOD MEMORIES OF **PLAYING IN THE STREET**, WITH MY FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS. **WE EXPLORED, LAUGHED, AND GREW TOGETHER.**

IT'S MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER THAT **OUR CHILDREN BE ABLE TO HAVE THE SAME HEALTHY EXPERIENCES AND ACTIVITIES.**

Yesenia & Waloli
Little Havana Parents

DO A PLAY STREET!



MANY OF US REMEMBER PLAYING IN THE STREETS AS CHILDREN. LONG SUMMER DAYS SPENT OUTSIDE WITH OTHER NEIGHBORHOOD KIDS. SADLY, MANY OF OUR KIDS HAVE NOT HAD THIS EXPERIENCE, BUT THEY CAN TODAY IN A SAFE AND HEALTHY WAY.

LET'S START

The following pages provide insights, tips, and a step-by-step guide on how to do a Play Street on your block.

If you need assistance at any point, don't hesitate to contact us. We are here to help. Contact the Director of Programs at Connect Familias at (305) 854-2973 or an Urban Impact Lab team member at (786) 508-2944.



GET READY: UNDERSTAND THE BEST PLACE FOR A PLAY STREET

Where you chose to do a Play Street will be an important part of how successful and enjoyable it turns out. The ideal locations have at least 3 of the following characteristics:

- ✦ A neighborhood block with limited traffic moving at slower speeds (25 mph or less)
- ✦ A place that lacks nearby parks or open, green spaces. If you and your children can't safely walk to your nearest park in under 10 minutes, then a Play Street might be a great fit.
- ✦ A residential area with lots of kids but little common space to play and gather.
- ✦ Residential blocks where neighbors want to get to know each other.
- ✦ Places where families value physical activity and social interaction.

If your block isn't ideal, and you would still like to do a Play Street in your neighborhood, reach out to a resident living on a street that fits the description above. Explain the idea and share this guide with them, then help them do a Play Street!

GET SET: INCLUDE EVERYONE

A great Play Street is built collaboratively with neighborhoods and friends. As you start thinking of organizing a Play Street, make sure to include neighbors of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities.

GO: 3 STEPS TO MAKE A PLAY STREET HAPPEN

01 SHARE THE IDEA

TALK TO YOUR NEIGHBORS.

Share information about Play Streets and why you think it's a good idea to do one on your block. Print or email this guide to them. **Talking to your neighbors directly and getting them engaged is the most important first step.**

ASK QUESTIONS.

What days and times might be good for a Play Street? (Offer weekday afternoons and evening as well as weekends.)

What are good activities? Think skating, drawing with chalk, group games, and sports without hard balls.

Will the adults help with safety, set up, or clean up?

LISTEN.

Listen openly to any concerns or questions that may arise. If you are not sure of the answer, be honest, and let him or her know that you will find out. (Then contact us!) Most concerns have a solution.



02 DESIGN TOGETHER

CREATE THE VOLUNTEER TEAM

A Play Street is successful when everyone pitches in.

Get adults to commit to be part of the volunteer team up front. Then, start by designing it together.

SET A TIME

Recommend 2 or 3 options for the day and time that fits the majority of people and select the final date and time together. Send out the options via a group chat or email (if you created one) or just talk to your neighbors directly.

A NOTE ON THE BEST DAYS AND TIMES:

- ❖ Shoot for 2 hours. It can be longer or shorter, but 2 hours is a great amount of time for the first few Play Streets.
- ❖ Remember it gets hot! If your street has little or no shade, consider the later afternoon (but before dark) or early morning.
- ❖ Observe when traffic is slowest and plan around those times.
- ❖ Remember, you'll need volunteers. Make sure at least 4 parents can help with safety and setting up, plus other parents to help with activities.

CONSIDER CREATING A GROUP EMAIL, CHAT, OR SOCIAL MEDIA GROUP. WHATSAPP OR A PRIVATE FACEBOOK GROUP ARE GOOD OPTIONS.

This will help you share ideas and information easily and quickly.



02 DESIGN TOGETHER

GET ACTIVE

Pick 2 to 3 activities that most kids and families on your block will want to participate in. Include something for all ages. Younger children under 5 love to play with blocks, chalk, large yard games and bubbles. Older kids like to run, play with hoola hoops, kites, larger rubber balls, large yard games, and water guns (for the summer).

All kids love it when their parents join in and play!

- Milagros, Little Havana Parent

DETAILS TO DISCUSS

- ❖ Will you have music and if so, who's bringing it?
- ❖ Who will bring drinking water?
- ❖ Who can bring a garbage bag?
- ❖ Who can put together and bring a first aid kit for scrapes?
- ❖ Who will bring toys (hoola hoops, balls, blocks, yard games, water guns, etc)?
- ❖ Who can bring or contribute street signs to slow down cars?



03 GET OUT AND PLAY!

SHARE AGAIN

Go out during the week leading up to the Play Street and remind anyone. You can print out small flyers or even draw some with neighborhood kids. Remember everyone is invited no matter the age or ability.

REMIND

Remind everyone in person and via your group chat or email. Confirm who will volunteer and participate. Make sure you have at least 4 volunteer parents, plus others to play with the kids and talk to other parents.

Do it!

Bring out toys and games just a few minutes before the actual start time. See the checklist on page 14 to help get you started.

Watch the clock - you'll be amazed at how fast the time goes by!

SAFETY FIRST

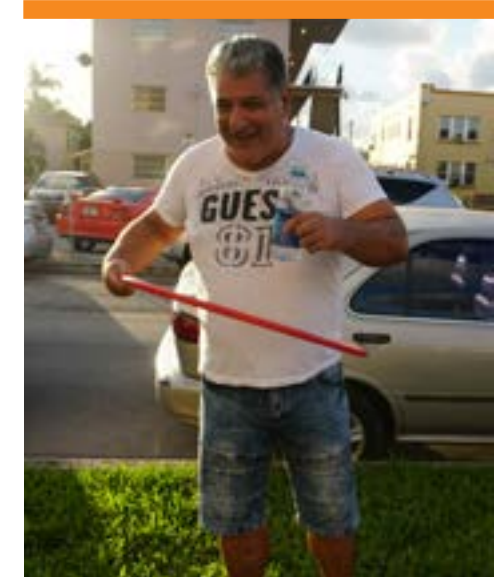
Be attentive to cars. Yell out to the kids in the street when a car is coming and make sure there is at least one parent stationed at either end of the street asking cars to slow down plus 1-2 parents clearing kids off the street so cars can pass safely.

DOCUMENT

Don't forget to take pictures and share with others!

CLEAN UP

Pick up all toys, games, and garbage. Leave the block at least as good as you found it.



PREP LIST

PREPARE (2-3 WEEKS BEFORE)

- Read this entire guide
- Talk to your neighbors about Play Streets. Let them know why it's a good idea. Share this guide.
- Ask questions. Find out when the best day and time is and what activities everyone likes.
- Listen openly to your neighbor's concerns and find ways to help them feel comfortable.
- Set up a group email or chat to discuss and plan details and share information.

PLAN (1-2 WEEKS BEFORE)

- Select a final date and time
- Select 2 to 3 activities and/or games.
- Make sure to:
 - Have all necessary toys and equipment for activities and games
 - If you're bringing music, have someone bring a stereo/speakers
 - Have drinking water onhand
 - Bring a garbage bag
 - Bring a first aid kit for scrapes
 - Have street signs to slow down cars

PLAN (WEEK OF)

- Remind all neighbors what is happening and who volunteered at least 3 days before
- Encourage anyone left to participate, even if just as an observer
- Gather all necessary supplies
- Safety first - have a simple plan for handling cars and kids in the street
- Have fun!
- Take pictures
- Clean up
- Get ready to do it again





FAQ

WHAT IF MY NEIGHBORS ARE RESISTANT TO THE IDEA?

It is normal for someone to be resistant to or uninterested in activities like this. If you encounter a neighbor that seems resistant, stay positive and upbeat. Let them know other parents will be involved to watch over the kids. Tell them adults are welcomed too and it would be great to get to know each other a little better. If all else fails, let them know the activity will only be on for 2 hours and everything will be picked up and left like nothing happened.

WHAT PERMITS DO I NEED?

For these activities, you are not closing the street completely or hosting an event and do not need a permit. The City of Miami has a Play Streets process but it is not easily accessible to residents. Urban Impact Lab and Connect Familias are working on improving this. Please feel free to reach out to us with any questions. Contact us if you'd like to help.

WHO CAN HELP US IF WE HAVE QUESTIONS OR NEED HELP?

Connect Familias and Urban Impact Lab are always available to help. Find our contact information at the bottom of this page.

WHAT IF THE POLICE COME?

Remember you are doing nothing wrong by playing in the street. The parents slowing traffic at the end of the street should let them by. If they approach you and ask questions, calmly let them know what you are doing: just letting kids play in the street. If they ask if this is an event or if you are blocking traffic, say no. If they ask you stop, pick up everything and comply.

WHAT IF IT RAINS?

If there is thunder and lightning, immediately instruct kids to go inside. Storms often pass quickly so you might wait it out. If the rain continues, consider rescheduling.

WHAT IF THE NEIGHBORS COMPLAIN?

Always remain calm and pleasant. If the neighbors complain, listen openly to their concerns. Invite them to participate. Let them know the activity will be over in a short time.

FAQ

HOW DO WE HANDLE DRIVERS?

Go out during the week leading up to the Play Streets and remind anyone. You can print out small flyers or even draw some with neighborhood kids. Remember everyone is invited no matter the age or ability.

WHAT ACTIVITIES CAN PARENTS OR OTHER ADULTS DO?

Play Streets isn't just for kids. If you live on a block with mostly adults, or there is a desire for more connections and interaction with neighbors, a Play Streets activity can be just the thing. Music and dominoes are a great start. Follow the guidelines in this document, giving special attention to the needs of parents and older adults.

CAN WE CLOSE OFF THE STREET COMPLETELY?

Not at this time. The ConnectFamilias and Urban Impact Lab team, along with resident leaders, are working with the City of Miami to make this possible. In other cities, such as Seattle and LA, a Play Street activity includes the ability for residents to temporarily barricade the end of the streets to significantly limit car traffic. The City of Miami already has PlayStreets legislation in place and we are working with them to help make it easily accessible to residents.

CAN WE HAVE OTHER PARTNERS?

Yes! Just remember that a Play Street is not an event or block party. Great partners include educational and arts programs and team sports trainers and physical activity programs. Partners like food trucks or organizations that want to set up a tent for outreach would **not** ideal for this.

WHAT IF MY BLOCK IS VERY LONG?

Some blocks are so long that it is unrealistic to expect parents and kids to gather along the whole length. In these cases, set up towards the center of the block, always keeping attention (and volunteers) at either end of the play area to watch for cars and help keep speed low and traffic controlled.

A PLAY STREET SAMPLE: PLAYFAMILIAS

PLAYFAMILIAS IS A PLAY STREETS INITIATIVE ORGANIZED BY LITTLE HAVANA RESIDENTS THROUGH THE CONNECTFAMILIAS ORGANIZATION IN PARTNERSHIP WITH URBAN IMPACT LAB.



HOW IT STARTED

In 2017, Urban Impact Lab and ConnectFamilias, with support from the Children's Trust, gathered Little Havana residents in order to share the idea of Play Streets with locals, assess genuine, community-based interest or support for the concept, and design a community-driven implementation plan and program.

The partnership shared one important value: that any activities or programs would be created by and vetted through local residents. Only by approaching the work in this way could the team build true community interest, engagement, and power.

@CONNECTFAMILIAS | @URBANIMPACTLAB
(305) 854-2973 | (786) 508-2944

Once the partnership values and goals were in place, the team reached out to a group of community residents, presented the Play Streets concept, asked for feedback, and determined community interest in doing it within their neighborhood.

Based on a high degree of enthusiasm and desire to move forward with the project, the team began the process of setting up community meetings and establishing a plan to assist residents with Play Streets implementation.



"The diversity of participants is one of the program's strengths. Here, families from many different countries have gathered to work together to achieve one common goal. That alone is beautiful."

-Juliet San Juan, ConnectFamilias

HOW IT PROGRESSED

After the initial presentation about Play Streets, the resident group (including residents and staff from Urban Impact Lab and ConnectFamilias) gathered again for 4 planning meetings. During these meetings, which were all held at ConnectFamilias for easy access, the group decided on and designed several things:

- ✦ Residents decided on a name for the activities: PlayFamilias.
- ✦ Residents dictated the design for the PlayFamilias logo and flyers.
- ✦ Location, dates and times for the first activities (considered prototypes) were set.
- ✦ Day-of activities were defined.
- ✦ Materials and supplies list was completed.
- ✦ Roles and volunteers were assigned.
- ✦ Feedback sessions for community input and project improvement were scheduled and held immediately after the first 2 PlayFamilias activities were complete.



ConnectFamilias parents created the name and designed the logo for the Little Havana Play Street Project:



WHAT WAS DONE & LEARNED

- ✦ By April 2018, residents completed 6 PlayFamilias activities.
- ✦ Over 15 local families consistently participated and engaged in the activities.
- ✦ Each PlayFamilias activity grew in number. As families saw the activity reoccur, they grew more comfortable with the idea and were much more likely to participate.
- ✦ PlayFamilias was completed on 2 different blocks in Little Havana and in both locations, a lead family that knows many of the residents and helps spread the word was absolutely key.
- ✦ Doing is important - demonstrating PlayFamilias (Play Streets) to residents was far more effective than talking about it.
- ✦ Kids really do love playing in the street, even if they are shy at first.

“The integration that was between parents and children, and friends, acquaintances... was really great.”

-Wilson, Little Havana Parent



A PLAY STREET IS GREAT WAY FOR KIDS TO GET EXTRA ACTIVITY RIGHT OUTSIDE THEIR DOOR, WITH LITTLE PREPARATION.

GETTING TO KNOW NEIGHBORS IS PART OF THE FUN!

ABOUT THE CHILDRENS TRUST

The Children’s Trust is a dedicated source of revenue derived from property taxes, established by voter referendum in 2002. Our mission is to partner with the community to plan, advocate for and fund strategic investments that improve the lives of all children and families in Miami-Dade County. We envision a community that works together to provide the essential foundations to enable every child to achieve their full potential... Because All Children Are Our Children. www.childrenstrust.org

ABOUT CONNECTFAMILIAS

ConnectFamilias is built on the premise that children do better when their families are strong, and parents do better when they live in places that help them succeed and become productive citizens. Our work is rooted in the belief that we all play a role in helping children achieve their full potential. We understand the importance of working with and supporting children’s families and communities - where they live, play and go to school. ConnectFamilias’ partners are people just like you. www.connectfamilias.org

ABOUT MIAMI CHILDRENS INITIATIVE

Miami Children’s Initiative is a 501 (3) nonprofit organization focused on transforming Liberty City into a prosperous community. In partnership with Liberty City’s residents, youth, religious centers, schools, businesses and non-profit organizations, we seek to address the needs of our community by investing in our children. MCI believes that Liberty City’s strength lies in the undeveloped potential of its youth and that through focused strategic work the potential of each child can be unleashed. www.iamlibertycity.org

ABOUT URBAN IMPACT LAB

Urban Impact Lab is a Miami-based social impact firm. We are a collective of urban planners, designers, scientists and technologists, and we work collaboratively with public and private partners. Our team develops and implements a variety of civic and urban programs with the goal of inspiring better cities and stronger communities. www.urbanimpactlab.com



HOW TO DO A PLAY STREET

MIAMI, FL

