

Commission on Immigrant and Refugee Affairs

Commission Recommendation: Free Block Party Initiative

Proposal Date: Thursday, February 27, 2020

Submitted to: Community, Vitality, and Safety Council Committee

The Free Block Parties initiative was originated from our Safety Committee. This is the biggest proposal that has come from this committee and with the most input from community members.

The members of the safety committee worked directly with communities that have backgrounds from all over the world and have received feedback about what would make them feel safer as Tacoma residents.

We learned that the biggest thing that makes us feel unsafe is not knowing our neighbors and neighbors not knowing us. "If only they could see under my head scarf, they would know that I'm not a scary person".

Immigrants from Latin America have let us know about their beloved parties on their street and how they use to easily play a game of soccer and cook outside, just closing their street with a couple of cars.

They have also told us about how their neighbors were instrumental in keeping them safe or in some cases, saving their lives.

Our commission has voted to request that the City removes the fee to get a block party permit, that it encourages neighbors to hold them (and to do so in many different languages) and that it doesn't require residents to rent barricades from private vendors.

In our research, we have found that Seattle has newly implemented this program and residents can use their garbage cans, ropes and signs to block their streets. Portland was a pioneer in implanting this program and they did it in a few months, without the need of long bureaucratic processes.

We hope in this request that our most diverse neighborhoods, and those with the most safety challenges can be served first.