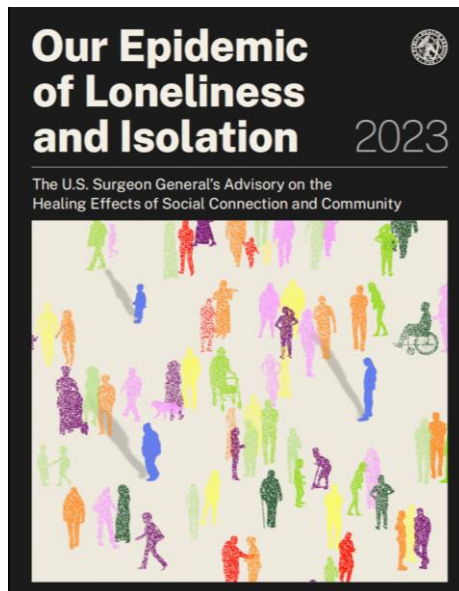


**STILTS,  
SAMOSAS,  
AND  
STREETS:  
INGREDIENTS AGAINST LONELINESS**



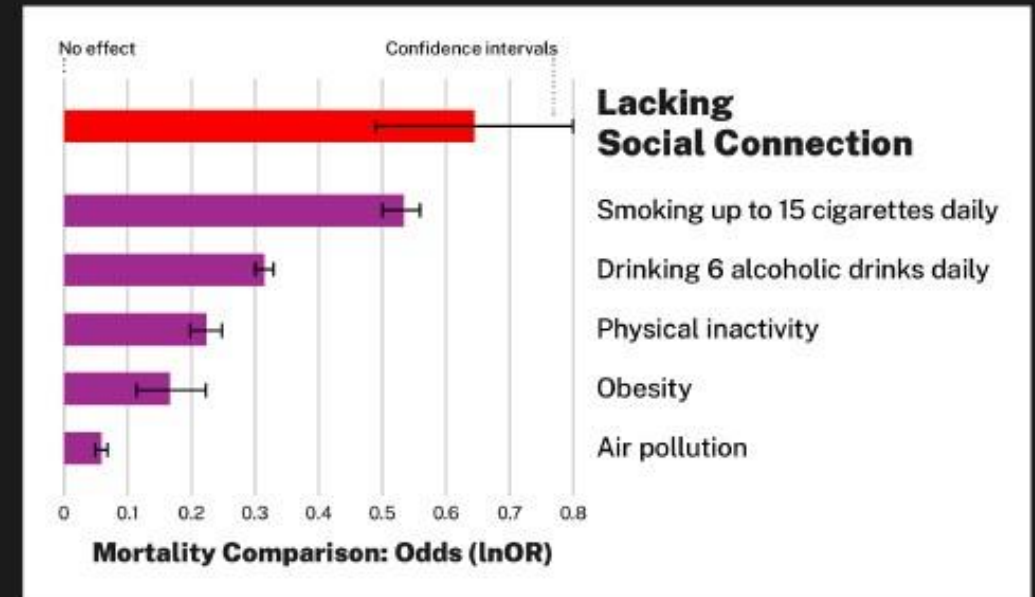
# LONELINESS

- Approximately half of U.S. adults report experiencing loneliness, with some of the highest rates among young adults<sup>1</sup>
- In 2018, only 16% of Americans reported that they felt very attached to their local community<sup>2</sup>



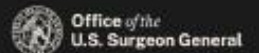
1-2. Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation, 2023

## Lacking social connection is as dangerous as smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day.



**Comparison groups:** Complex measures of social integration: high v. low; not smoking v. smoking < 15 cigarettes daily; alcohol abstinence v. drinking > 6 alcoholic drinks daily; physical activity v. inactivity; low BMI v. high BMI; low air pollution v. high air pollution.

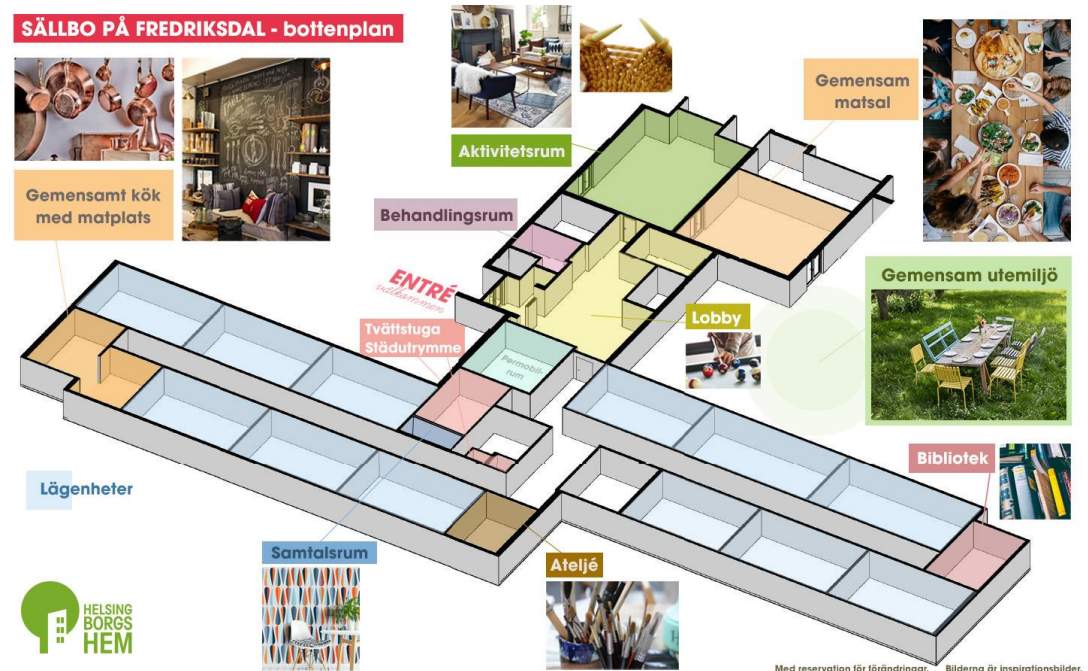
**Source:** Holt-Lunstad J, Robles TF, Sbarra DA. Advancing Social Connection as a Public Health Priority in the United States. *American Psychology*. 2017;72(6):517-530. doi:10.1037/amp0000103. This graph is a visual approximation.



# COMBATING LONELINESS

## SällBo, Intergenerational Housing, Sweden

- Most apartments are occupied by tenants who are +70 years old, and the rest are occupied by young adults between 18 and 25 years of age, including people who have recently received a residence permit in Sweden
- Residents have to sign an agreement to socialize with neighbors for at least two hours a week



# COMBATING LONELINESS

## Strategic Plan Against Loneliness, Barcelona

- The Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness includes a definition of loneliness and why it has become a social problem and, secondly, a diagnosis of loneliness in Barcelona, showing the most recent data on the population profiles that suffer it the most.
- The document includes citations authored by members of the Scientific Advisory Board to Combat Loneliness (CACs), a body created to share knowledge from academia about loneliness at different life stages



# COMBATING LONELINESS

## Minister of Loneliness and Isolation, Japan

- The government created the post of minister in charge of measures for loneliness and isolation in 2021, at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic
- Through new legislation, the government plans to boost efforts to tackle isolation, including having the Cabinet Office take charge of countermeasures and making a telephone consultation service permanent by increasing the number of staff and resources.

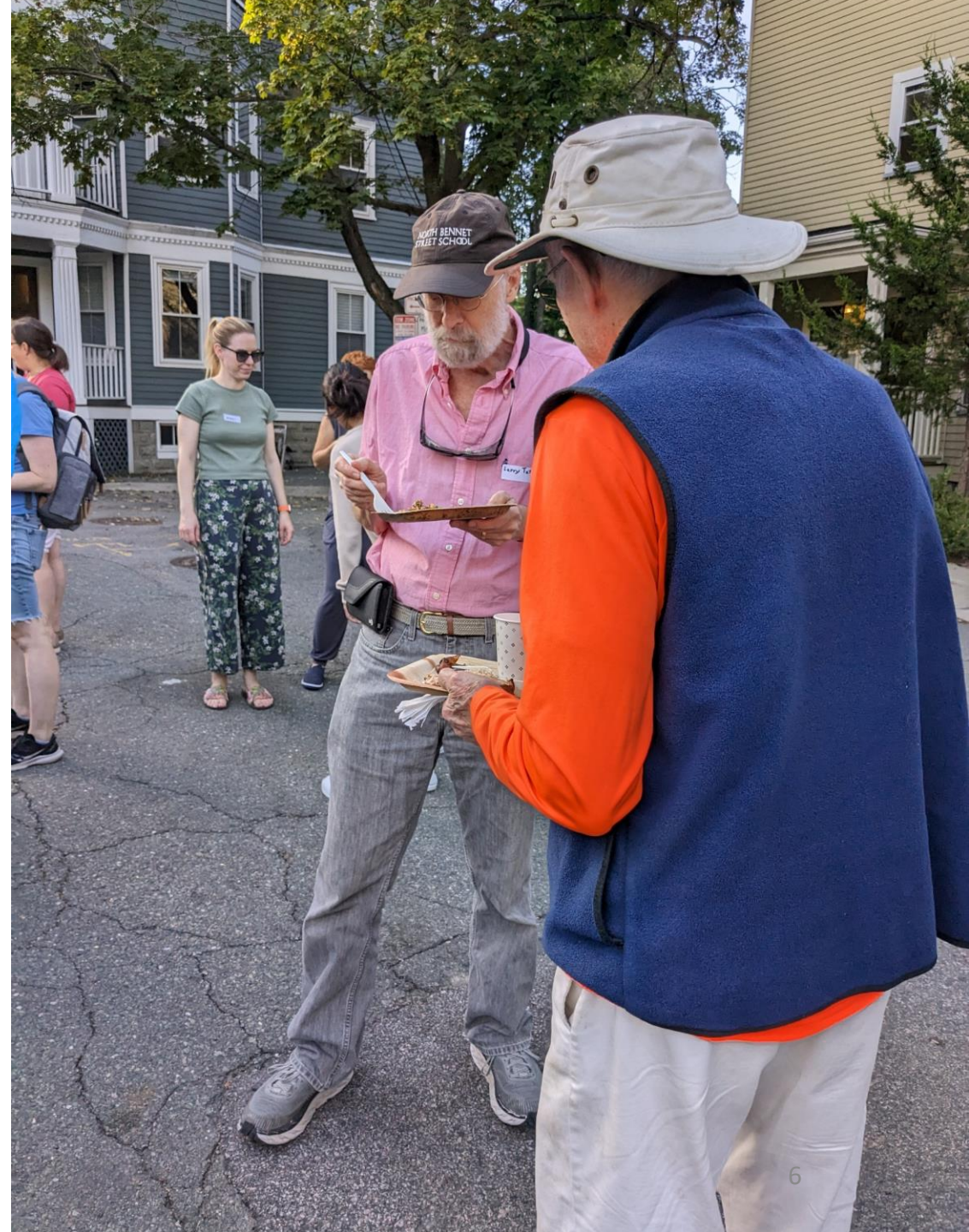
## The Friendly Bench, UK

- The Friendly Bench combines a bespoke, safe and accessible outdoor seating space with organized, regular community-led meet-up activities for local people to attend



# CAMBRIDGE, MA

- 118,403 residents<sup>5</sup>
- Population density is 18,274 persons per square mile and 8,124 housing units per square mile<sup>6</sup>
- Residents over 65 = 11.3%
- Foreign born residents = 29.1%
- Persons with disabilities(<65) = 4.5%



# 2023 BLOCK PARTIES IN CAMBRIDGE



# 2023 CAMPAIGN

1. Partnership between Cambridge Public Health Department; Cambridge Arts; Traffic, Parking and Transportation Department; and the Community Development Department
2. City Council directive to ease the permitting process
3. Changes to permit:
  - Remove \$25 fee
  - Reduce signature requirement
  - Apply two weeks before the event
4. Additional resources:
  - \$200 grant
  - Play Street equipment
5. Communication campaign

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

IT'S EASIER TO HOST

**\$200** AWARDS AVAILABLE **BLOCK** *Let's go!*

**PARTIES**

AND **PLAY** **STREETS** **SUPER FUN!**

[BORROW A POP-UP PARTY KIT – IT'S FREE!]

*Join the fun!*

LEARN MORE AT **CAMBRIDGEMA.GOV/BLOCKPARTY**



CAMBRIDGE | ARTS

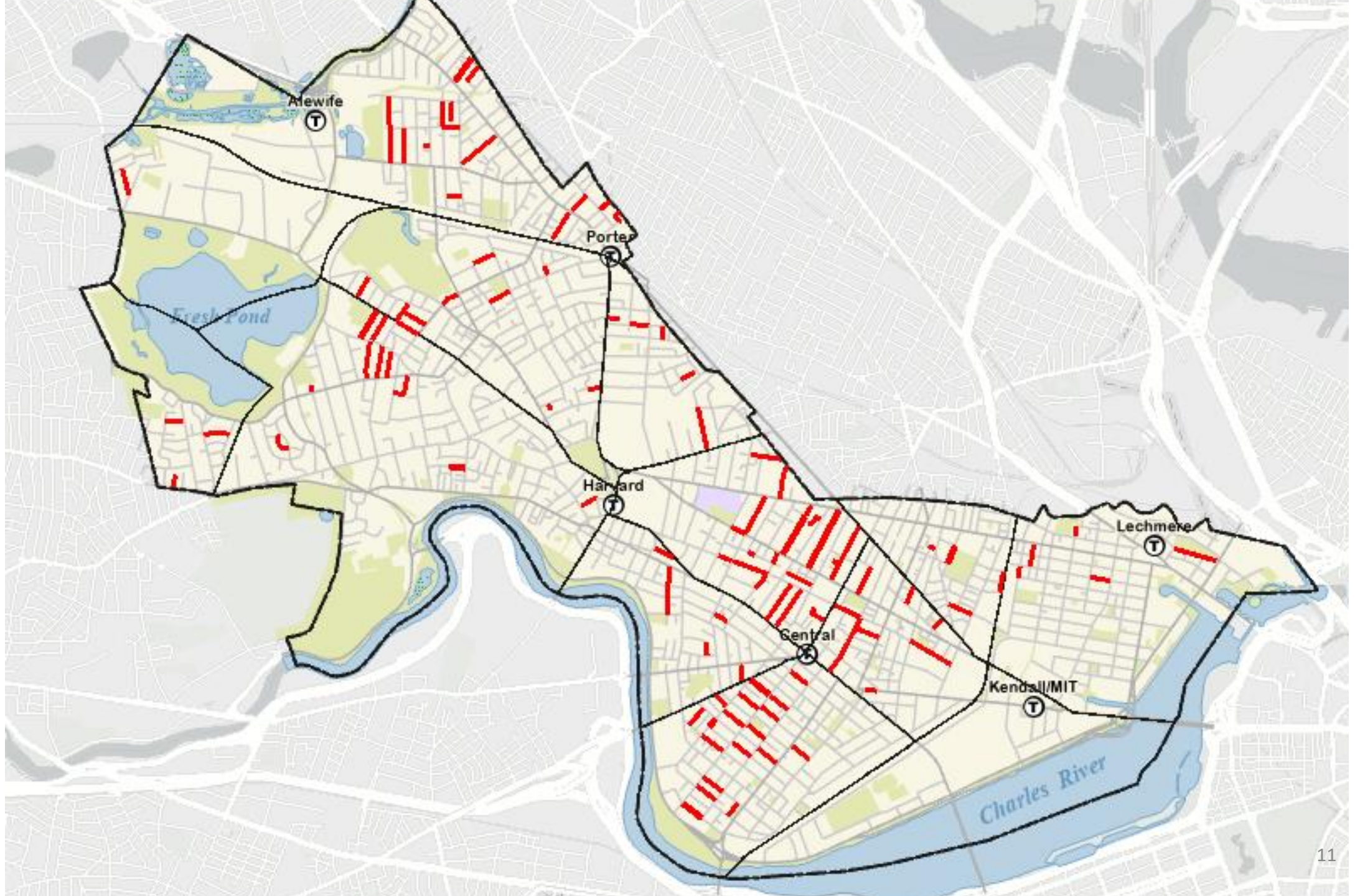


# FINDINGS



# MORE PARTIES!

- 78 block parties, tripled from 2022
- 36 first-time block party hosts
- Activity concentrated in specific neighborhoods
- Resident survey (n=75):
  - 97% of respondents met someone new at their block party
  - 89% of respondents have had social contact with neighbors since their block party
  - Reducing the signatures requirement found more important than the \$200 awards
  - Need more intergenerational mingling
  - Ice breakers: international food, knife sharpening, clothing swap, snake show, DJ, composting
  - Name tags!



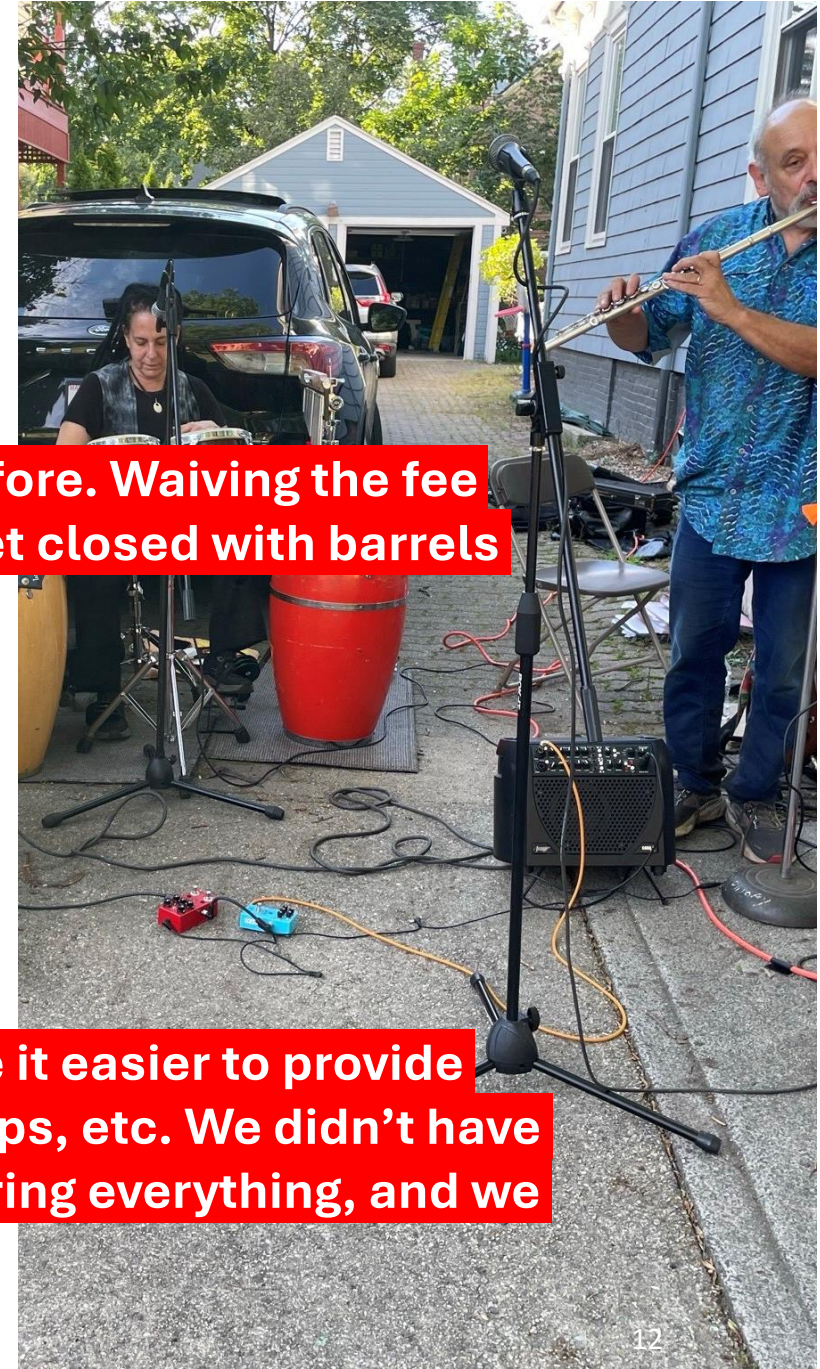
**“wish there were older people there like us”**



**“We've had non-permitted block parties before. Waiving the fee encouraged us to "go legit." Having the street closed with barrels really helped the party grow!”**



**“Having the \$200 grant made it easier to provide food and utensils, plates, cups, etc. We didn't have to depend on neighbors to bring everything, and we had plenty for everyone”**



# LESSONS



- Reach out to specific isolated communities
- Neighborhood-level emphasis
- Engage residents of public housing
- Team dynamics due to cross-departmental effort
- Permit barriers:
  - Avoid math/percentages!
  - Closing the street
- One application for permits, grants, and equipment
- Create a How to Guide and PSA video



