

Policy 7.2.18 Special Events

POLICY PURPOSE:

The purpose of this policy is to consolidate and clarify the City's special event goals, policies, and procedures

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Sunnyvale recognizes the social, cultural, and economic enrichment that special events bring to Sunnyvale. Special events foster a unique sense of place, build community, provide an enjoyable quality of life for community members, and contribute to the local economy by attracting visitors and shoppers. The City is committed to encouraging privately sponsored special events while providing for the protection of residents, visitors and event participants. It is the intent of the City to protect the quality of life of its residents and provide careful stewardship of City resources by establishing:

- The least restrictive and most reasonable manner of regulation to maximize the benefits and minimize the burdens of special events;
- Streamlined event application and approval processes; and
- Policies and regulations that allow for the advance planning and management of City personnel and resources.

1. Definitions

Special Event – a program or set of activities that is unique or out-of-the norm in nature, requires significant effort to plan and implement, and may require City permits or utilize City resources. Special events include, but are not limited to, parades, festivals, street fairs, sidewalk sales, outdoor music concerts, athletic events such as runs, walkathons, bicycle races, etc.

Community Event – a special event which is open to the public and typically expects a large turnout from Sunnyvale community members.

Free Speech Event – an event at which the expression of free speech is the principal purpose of the event. See Sunnyvale [Municipal Code Chapter 9.45](#) for additional information.

Fundraiser – an event that solicits funds from attendees either through direct ticket sales or requests for donations. This includes fundraising activities, such as raffles, silent auctions, or similar activities, conducted by subcommittees or affiliated groups of the sponsoring organization.

Event Owner – The organization submitting the event application and that will be responsible for the event.

Event Sponsor – Organizations which and/or individuals who provide resources for an event in exchange for publicity or recognition in an event's promotional materials and

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activities.

City Sponsored Event – Events that are staff run, pursuant to a contract with the City, or awarded Community Event Grant funds (see Section 2D).

Co-Hosted Events – Events where the City co-presents with partner organization or agency.

2. Events Conducted by Parties Other than the City

The City is committed to a very high standard of customer service and seeks to provide clear and streamlined event procedures and regulations, including timely responses to event-related inquiries.

A. Special Event Procedures

- (I) All persons who wish to initiate a special event requiring City permits or resources must complete the City's Special Event Application, which shall be reviewed and approved or denied administratively by the appointed special events coordinator in consultation with other affected City departments. The City shall inform the applicant in writing of approval, the grounds for denial, and the conditions of approval.
- (II) Event applicants/owners must comply with all event permit requirements and applicable laws and regulations. Applicants must provide evidence of compliance with any required permits from outside agencies (e.g., health department, liquor license, etc.), proof of required insurance, hold harmless agreements, and any other documents identified in the application procedure.
 - (a) City employees are prohibited from being listed as the event owner on a non-City organized special event permit application.

B. Fees for City Services; Waivers

- (I) Except as otherwise noted in this policy, the City does not provide in-kind services or fee reductions for events conducted by other agencies, individuals, or organizations. All event costs, including those for City services, facility rentals, and permitting fees, must be paid by the entity conducting the event. All fees shall be charged in compliance with the City's current fee schedule. Special Event Fees include but are not limited to:
 - (a) Permit fees. All fees required must be paid prior to issuance of a permit. The permit will be issued when the applicant has

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agreed in writing to comply with the terms and conditions of the permit, and all other conditions have been met.

- (b) Salary costs for Public Safety officers and other City personnel who facilitate or monitor the event.
- (c) Costs for use of City equipment such as barricades, cones, etc.
- (d) Deposit for clean-up costs associated with permitted sale of food and beverages, erection of structures, or use of refreshment or aid stations (refundable if no clean-up or damage to City property is incurred).
- (e) Facility rental fees.
- (f) Fees for use of City banner sites.

(II) **Fee Waivers:** All requests for fee waivers are subject to the following requirements and conditions:

- (a) **Groups and Organizations Eligible for Special Event Fee Waivers:** Organizations based in Sunnyvale with 501(C) or equivalent nonprofit status; Public Schools whose attendance boundaries include Sunnyvale; Community College Districts with campuses in Santa Clara County serving Sunnyvale residents; and local elected officials representing Sunnyvale constituents (e.g., Sunnyvale state and federal legislative representatives, Santa Clara County, special district and school district representatives for Sunnyvale) may request waivers for certain fees associated with special event permits.
- (b) **Fee Waiver Requirements and Restrictions:** Fee waivers may only be granted for events that are open to the public and do not charge admission fees. Fundraising events are not eligible for fee waivers. Events hosted by elected officials are only eligible for a waiver if they are for official purposes associated with the elected office. Events hosted by or for an elected official that occur within ninety (90) days preceding an election and/or are intended to support, promote, or oppose a political candidate, ballot measure, or political party are not eligible for fee waivers.
- (c) **Amount of Waiver:** Fee Waivers may be approved for up to 50% of the application fee, facility use (rental) fees, and refundable security deposits. Fees not eligible for waivers include: direct staffing costs, insurance, and any fees assessed by an outside agency (e.g. Santa Clara County).
- (d) **Fee Waivers Associated With CENGP:** Organizations receiving Community Event Grants (CENGP) for their event are not eligible for special event fee waivers.

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- (e) **Other Requests for Fee Waivers:** Requests for waivers inconsistent with the standards set forth above may be considered by the City Council on a biannual basis, in accordance with application deadlines established by the City. Applications not submitted timely for each review cycle will be deferred to the next review date.
- (f) **Waivers Not City Sponsorship or Endorsement:** Fee waivers are not considered a City sponsorship or a Co-hosted event, unless designated in writing by the City.

C. City Resources at Special Events

If an event owner requests City participation in a special event, such as providing a fire engine or a booth about City services, the appropriate City department may participate at no charge as resources permit and if deemed appropriate by the City.

D. Community Event Grant Program

The City may fund community events through the Community Event Grant program, subject to the following criteria:

- (I) Council will establish a subcommittee to review grant applications and allocate grant funding. Subcommittee membership will be by mayoral appointment;
- (II) Community Event Grant applications will not be funded if the applicant owes a debt to the City;
- (III) Applicants for Community Event Grant funding must submit a marketing plan with the application to include the types of advertisements to be used and where they will be placed. Furthermore, post-event evaluation must be provided to the City, reporting what advertising/marketing was conducted and its frequency. The applicant must include a copy of any billing for ads and a tear-sheet or other copy of the advertisements;
- (IV) Use of Community Event Grant program awards will not be allowed for fundraising events;
- (V) Grant funding is not intended to be an ongoing funding source for an event; a new application must be submitted and will be evaluated each year; funding in one year is not a guarantee of future funding. Grant application forms and post-event evaluation forms must include a four-year event sustainability plan. Furthermore, the grant is intended to provide financial assistance to support events with funding gaps;
- (VI) The City will not waive any fees; grant awards may be used to cover approved costs, including City costs payable to the City;
- (VII) Events funded by the grant will receive some in-kind support (see Community Event grant application for more details). In-kind

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support will be determined through an annual evaluation of the program and resources. The grant application form will include language that the subcommittee may request an interview with the applicant.

3. City's Role Regarding Community Associations Forming to Provide Events

Consistent with the City's commitment to leveraging resources through community partnerships, as appropriate and upon invitation, the Director of Library & Recreation Services will explore participating in the formation of community associations, or other non-profit entities, dedicated to supporting or managing a City-wide community event.

4. City-Hosted Special Events

- A. To the extent that economic conditions and the City's resources allow, Sunnyvale will provide annual, community-wide special events that promote arts, culture, civic engagement, education, employment opportunities, health and wellbeing, and family-oriented festivals.
- B. Events organized by the City of Sunnyvale will not require a special event permit. Although excluded from the special event process, city hosted events may still be subject to other permit requirements.
- C. Volunteer support and contributions by other organizations and businesses encourage community participation, provide recognition, and lower event costs. Event sponsors providing in-kind service contributions or donations to a City-Hosted event may receive recognition (e.g. organization logo on marketing materials) in accordance with an approved sponsorship plan for the event.

Sponsor eligibility requirements should comply with Council Policy 7.1.5 (Grants, Donations, Contributions and Sponsorships). The City will not accept sponsorships from political parties, political action committees, campaign committees, or any candidate for elected office within ninety (90) days prior to an election in which they are a candidate. Sponsorship recognition shall not be used to promote any political campaign, candidate, party or ballot measure.

(Adopted: RTC 06-090 (3/28/2006); Amended: RTC 10-234 (9/14/2010); Council action 2/15/2011; Council action 3/29/2011; Amended: RTC 26-0448 (4/21/2026))

Lead Department: Library and Recreation Services

For reference, see also:

- Council Policy 7.1.5 *Grants, Donations, Contributions and Sponsorships*
- Sunnyvale Municipal Code Chapter 9.45 *Special Event Permits*