



City of Raleigh Special Event Policy

September 2, 2014

Last updated October 2021

Objective: To regulate the use of streets, sidewalks, and greenways in the City for all organized special events, with the purpose of protecting the health and public safety of citizens, limiting the inconvenience to residents, businesses, places of worship and learning, and other regular users of these facilities, establishing a straightforward and accountable process for event organizers, and enabling public agencies to manage these events in a cost-effective and well-coordinated way.

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1. Special Event Definitions:

For the purpose of this policy, a special event is defined as an organized activity that utilizes or impedes public right-of-way for entertainment, commercial, or social purposes. Filming in public spaces throughout the City is also included in this policy. Special events include but are not limited to the following:

- A. General Events: Organized activity that has a stationary footprint in an identifiable location for a specific duration of time, often involving amplified noise, food, beverage, merchandise, and/or other forms of entertainment. Examples include festivals, performances, rallies, markets, parties, tournaments and other similar events.

General Events fall into three tiers based on impact and size:

- i. General Event Tier I: Greater impact on the community, which may involve the closure of multiple city blocks; closure that inconveniences numerous residents or establishments; excessive noise; attendance of 500 or more people; and significant event infrastructure that requires inspection and permitting by the Raleigh Fire Department's Office of the Fire Marshal.
- ii. General Event Tier II: Low-impact events that close only one city block and/or an off-street venue; have fewer than 500 total attendees; affect a minimal number of residents or establishments; and have no significant event infrastructure.

Event cannot include or require any of the following:

- Event attendance of more than 500 people
- Tents over 800 square feet or inflatable structures over 400 square feet
- Fireworks, pyrotechnics, open flame performances, or bonfires
- Special amusement buildings or rides
- Amplified sounds beyond the use of small speakers
- Closure of more than one city block
- Full closure of City Plaza (use of the off-street portions of the Plaza only is permissible under Tier II)

- iii. General Event Tier III: Minimal-impact events that take place in off-street venues and do not close roads; have fewer than 200 total attendees; affect a minimal number of residents or establishments; and have no significant event infrastructure.

Event cannot include or require any of the following:

- Closure of the public right-of-way

- Event attendance of more than 200 people
 - Tents over 800 square feet or inflatable structures over 400 square feet
 - Fireworks, pyrotechnics, open flame performances, or bonfires
 - Special amusement buildings or rides
 - Amplified sounds beyond the use of small speakers
 - Full closure of City Plaza (use of the off-street portions of the Plaza only is permissible under Tier III)
- B. Road Races and Parades: Organized activity involving running, biking, walking or other means of transportation, involving three or more participants and utilizing a fixed course that involves the use or obstruction of City street right-of-way, City sidewalks, and greenways.
- C. Neighborhood Block Parties: Organized small-scale activity that closes a small number of blocks on a local-service, residential street. These small-scale gatherings are initiated by and are intended to attract only local residents who live on or in close proximity to the street being closed. They are not intended for the general public.
- D. Filming: Organized activity involving film and/or still photography production that requires the use of a public right-of-way, City park, or other City property.

Use of City parks and greenways is additionally subject to any existing policies and procedures of the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Department.

2. **Management Responsibility:**

The City of Raleigh Special Events Office serves as a liaison between city departments, event producers, and members of the community as it oversees organized events through the coordination of enterprise-wide functions. All special event production within the City requires the issuance of a permit through the Special Events Office. The Special Events Office will be the primary point of contact for all events covered in this policy, and will review each event for compliance with this policy. The Special Events Office shall either approve an event permit or may place conditions upon, reschedule, relocate, or deny any requested event that does not meet this policy.

- A. Events Task Force (ETF). The Special Events Office will maintain an Events Task Force (ETF) for coordination, notification, and collaborative purposes that will include representatives from groups including but not limited to: Emergency Management, Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources, Raleigh Water, Solid Waste Services, Fire, Police, Communications, Information Technology, Housing and Neighborhoods, and Transportation, as well as external agencies or organizations necessary to the coordination of specific events or with existing event knowledge that could prove beneficial to the group. The Special Events Office will facilitate meetings approximately once per month to hear feedback and recommendations regarding current and future special events.
- i. Downtown and Hillsborough Street Events. As a part of the Events Task Force, representatives from the Downtown Raleigh Alliance (DRA) and the Hillsborough Street Community Services Corporation (HSCSC) shall be given an opportunity to review any event within their particular Municipal Service District (MSD) and may recommend approval of an event, recommend denial of an event, suggest conditions, suggest rescheduling, or suggest relocating any requested event.
- B. Communication. City staff will maintain a website that allows community members to view the master events calendar, which will provide specific event details. Staff will also publish a weekly email digest of upcoming special events, and will maintain a feedback form that members of the community can access to provide comments regarding special events and their impacts.

3. Application and Permitting Process:

The Special Events Office will establish an event application and a user's guide that will outline specifically the process, deadlines, application materials, checklists, notification requirements and additional information necessary to allow event organizers to submit proposed events for approval and have a more predictable timeframe for approval, with the additional goal of allowing agencies to effectively anticipate the impact of an event and plan accordingly.

A. Submittal Timeframe. Event applications must be submitted according to the deadlines for each specific event type as outlined below, and will be accepted no more than one year prior to the date of the event. Submission of an application does not guarantee the issuance of a permit. Applications are not considered submitted until the application fee has been received.

- i. Road Races and Parades*. Applications must be received at least 120 days prior to the proposed date of the event. Processing and approving a race, parade, or walk route is a complex process that requires coordination with numerous city departments and/or other entities. Under extreme extenuating circumstances, the Special Events Office may consider late applications and may charge an additional \$250 late application fee. The City does not guarantee that any event will be reviewed if it is submitted after the deadline.

*A moratorium has been placed on any new race within high-impact areas (see section 4.A.i.a).

- ii. General Events. Applications for general events must be received by no later than the deadline correlated with each tier, as outlined below.

General Event Tier I: 90 days
General Event Tier II: 45 days
General Event Tier III: 30 days

Under certain extenuating circumstances, the Special Events Office may consider late applications for Tier I events and may charge an additional \$250 late application fee. The City does not guarantee that any event will be reviewed if it is submitted after the deadline. Late applications will not be considered for Tier II and Tier III events.

- iii. Neighborhood Block Parties. Applications for neighborhood block parties must be received at least 30 days prior to the proposed date of the event. It is recommended that organizers apply at least 45 days prior to the event date if the block party might require special permitting for the use of tents, amusement structures, fireworks etc. Under certain circumstances, the Special Events Office may consider late block party applications and may charge an additional \$25 late application fee. The City does not guarantee that any event will be reviewed if it is submitted after the deadline.
- iv. Filming. Processing time for film applications is determined by the extent of the request, ranging from approximately 15 to 90 days. It is recommended that applications for extensive filming spanning multiple days or locations be submitted at least 30 days in advance. Low-impact productions can often be processed within two weeks. The Special Events Office will attempt to accommodate requests within reason but cannot guarantee an application will be reviewed if it is not submitted at least 15 days prior to the shoot date.

B. Fees. *Application fees* are due when the application is submitted. Applications will not be reviewed until the application fee is received. Upon payment of these fees the application will be routed through the various departments for approval. Payment of the application fee is nonrefundable and does not guarantee event approval; however, event organizers will have the option to modify dates and locations at no additional cost if they are denied approval due to a scheduling conflict. Upon application approval, the associated *permit* fees

will be required before a permit is issued. The event organizer shall be responsible for producing the permit upon request of any City official throughout the duration of the event. The City reserves the right to bill event organizers after the event for any extraordinary costs imposed on the City for such things as on-site structure repair, dropping bollards for emergency vehicle access, trash pickup, or damage to streets or sidewalks due to the event. All bills must be paid within 15 days of receipt. Road races that include events of more than one distance shall only be required to pay the fee for the longest distance. In the event that an activity classifies as more than one type of event, the organizer will be required to pay whichever application and permit fee is determined to be most appropriate by the Special Events Office.

- i. Reimbursement Policy. There is no reimbursement of application fees or late application fees. Permit fees will be fully reimbursed if an event is cancelled at least 15 days prior to the event date. There is no reimbursement of permit fees if an event is cancelled within 15 days of the event date. Fees may be transferable towards future event applications/permits if event is cancelled due to inclement weather or other emergency situations, which will be determined at the discretion of the Special Events Office.

Event Type	Deadline	Application Fee	Permit Fee	Late Fee
Parade	120 Days	\$100	\$100	\$250
Walk/Race 5K and Under	120 Days	\$100	\$100	\$250
Race Over 5K	120 Days	\$100	\$250	\$250
General Event Tier III	30 Days	N/A	N/A	N/A*
General Event Tier II	45 Days	\$50	\$100	N/A*
General Event Tier I	90 Days	\$100	\$250	\$250
Neighborhood Block Party	30 Days	\$50	\$0	\$25
Filming & Photography	15-90 days**	\$50	\$50	N/A

*No late applications will be accepted for General Event Tier II or III

**Deadline for Filming & Photography applications depends on the complexity of the production, and is determined at the discretion of the Special Events Office

- C. Reservation of dates. Dates for events will be reserved on the event calendar based on a first-come, first-serve basis, and are subject to the policy restrictions noted in this document. Recurring events will be given first priority to reserve the same day of the same week of the following calendar year (e.g., the second Saturday of February) or to reserve the same exact date of the following calendar year (e.g. February 14th). Conflicts that arise due to these two different reservation methods (e.g., February 14th falls on the second Saturday of February) will be handled by Special Events Office on a case-by-case basis. Determining first priority for date reservation between conflicting events will be at the discretion of the Special Events Office. All recurring annual events will need to receive an acceptable performance evaluation (see section 3.D) to retain first priority rights. Once an event organizer receives their performance evaluation, they will have two weeks to submit a letter of intent stating their desire to hold the event with the same date and location the following year. This letter will serve as a reservation but will not replace an official application, which will still need to be submitted by the corresponding deadline (see section 3.A).

- i. City Council-approved economic development events. From time to time, it may be necessary for the City Council to approve special events of city-wide importance that conflict with previously scheduled events that have reserved dates and/or routes under this policy. In this case the City will attempt to give a minimum of 12-month notice to any event organizer whose scheduled event will be superseded by such a Council-approved special event, but advanced notice cannot be guaranteed.

- D. Performance Evaluation. The Special Events Office will utilize a performance evaluation that will measure the success of event organizers in conforming to all policies and permitted activities. This performance evaluation will help event organizers improve events from year to year, reduce the impact on public agencies to respond to events, and will provide the approving agencies with a means to establish priority for the reservation of dates in the approval process as noted above. Events with a subpar evaluation risk losing the preferred date, having additional fees imposed, or cancellation of all future events.

E. Notification Policy. In an effort to improve communications and keep citizens, businesses, and other establishments fully informed of all events that will potentially impact their area, the Special Events Office requires the following notification procedures. Failure to comply with these requirements will result in unfavorable feedback on the event evaluation and may affect an event organizer's ability to host events in the future. Notification requirements are done at the expense of the event organizer. The Special Events Office may approve and/or require additional or different notification requirements, which will vary based on the impact of an event.

i. Notification Components. Information to include on all notifications is listed below. For postcards and flyers, you are required to use black ink on brightly colored yellow paper. The goal of the postcard/flyer requirements is to build a notification pattern that is consistent, highly visible, and recognizable to the public.

- a. Name of Event
- b. Sponsoring Organization(s)
- c. Date and time of event
- d. Description of road closures (locations and times)
- e. Description of event
- f. Noise impacts, such as music or fireworks, including timeframe
- g. Name, email address, and phone number of event organizer
- h. Website associated with event
- i. Event feedback form QR code or link

ii. Road Races and Parades. At least four weeks prior to the event date, organizers must notify all affected community members, including businesses, residents, places of worship, and places of learning, located either directly on the event route or on a side street that will be blocked or heavily inconvenienced by the road closures associated with the route, to let them know of the event and its impacts. Organizers must notify either a manager or owner of the establishment. Citizen Advisory Councils affected by the event must also be contacted and when possible, any affected Home Owner Associations should also be notified.

In the event of a large apartment or business complex with one main lobby, it is acceptable to hang (with the building owner/manager's permission) a flyer notification in a highly visible main area. If there is not a main lobby entrance, or if the organizer is not permitted to hang a flyer, the organizer must distribute the notification to all apartment residencies or businesses, or reach out to the building owner/manager to determine another appropriate method of information distribution.

An explanation of the event notification plan, including postcard or flyer/email template, must be submitted to the Special Events Office for approval at least six weeks prior to the event date.

Approved forms of notification include standardized postcards mailed to all impacted individuals, or individualized notifications such as in-person conversations, phone calls, and email exchanges that have been thoroughly documented and submitted to the Special Events Office.

iii. General Events. By no later than the deadline corresponding with each event tier, organizers must notify all affected community members, including businesses, residents, places of worship, and places of learning, located either directly within the event road closure or on a side street that will be blocked or heavily inconvenienced by the road closures associated with the event, to let them know of the event and its impacts. Organizers must notify either a manager or owner of the establishment. Citizen Advisory Councils affected by the event must also be contacted and when possible, any affected Home Owner Associations should also be notified.

In the event of a large apartment or business complex with one main lobby, it is acceptable to hang (with the building owner/manager's permission) a flyer notification in a highly visible main area. If there is not a main lobby entrance, or if the organizer is not permitted to hang a flyer, the organizer

must distribute the notification to all apartment residencies or businesses, or reach out to the building owner/manager to determine another appropriate method of information distribution.

Approved forms of notification include standardized postcards mailed to all impacted individuals, or individualized notifications such as in-person conversations, phone calls, and email exchanges that have been thoroughly documented and submitted to the Special Events Office.

An explanation of the event notification plan, including postcard or flyer/email template, must be submitted to the Special Events Office for approval by no later than the following deadlines corresponding with each tier:

General Event Tier I: Six weeks prior to event
General Event Tier II: Three weeks prior to event
General Event Tier III: Three weeks prior to event

Community members must be notified by no later than the following deadlines corresponding with each tier:

General Event Tier I: Four weeks prior to event
General Event Tier II: 15 days prior to event
General Event Tier III: 15 days prior to event

- iv. Neighborhood Block Parties. Event organizers must notify every resident living within the area of the road closure or in close enough proximity that they will be inconvenienced by the road closures and/or noise impacts associated with the event. Any businesses or places of learning or worship must also be notified if applicable. The event organizer can use any form of communication, provided that the notification covers all required components (see section 3.E.i), and must notify all residents and establishments at least 15 days prior to the event.
- v. Filming. Event organizers must notify every resident, business, and places of learning and worship located within the area of the road closure or in close enough proximity that they will be inconvenienced by the road closures and/or noise impacts associated with the activities. The organizer can use any form of communication, provided that the notification covers all required components (see section 3.E.i), and must notify all establishments and residents at least 72 hours prior to the event.

4. Limitation on Events within the City:

In order to continue to cost-effectively support these events with public staff, to protect the interests of community members who are regular users of streets, sidewalks, and greenways from undue inconvenience, and to continue to support these events that are positive for the health, recreation and well-being of participants and for the economic development of the City, the following restrictions shall be considered by the approving agencies in the reservation process.

A. Road Races and Parades.

- i. Overall limitation on annual events. No more than 95 races, walks, or parades that involve street, sidewalk and/or greenway closings will be scheduled within the City in any calendar year.
 - a. Moratorium on High-Impact Areas. Effective immediately through no sooner than January 1, 2016, no new events may apply to host a road race in a high-impact area. Furthermore, existing races may not change locations to another high-impact area to attain compliance with the Special Event Policy or for any other reason. Extenuating circumstances may be considered at the discretion of the Special Events Office.

- ii. Limitation on events using the same or similar routes. Events using the same or similar routes, including the same general geographic area, particularly involving heavily used thoroughfares, should not be scheduled on the same day, subsequent days, or on subsequent weekends within the year. Events that request use of certain high-impact areas are subject to additional limitations as determined at the discretion of the Special Events Office. Though this section does not apply to street festivals, block parties, etc., the Special Events Office will consider the impact of such events when scheduling road races and parades and may require alternate dates or routes if a proposed event falls on the same or a subsequent weekend to any other special event.
- iii. Limitation on number of events on any given weekend. No more than four road race or parade events covered under this section shall be scheduled in any one weekend. No more than two of these events can be major events that either involves a run of 10K or more in distance or the closure of the event route for more than three hours.
- iv. Limitation on use of public greenways. Upon recommendation of the Parks, Recreation and Greenway Advisory Board, the City's greenway system is divided into six sections representing areas of the City (NE, N, NW, SE, S, and SW). No more than two events per year that involve any portion of the greenway system will be scheduled in each of the six sections – a total of 12 events per year throughout the City. If any event requires the use of the greenway system, this event will count towards the 95 street race cap AND the 12 greenway race cap.
- v. Limitation on events that are not in the best interest of the City. The Special Events Office has the discretion to disallow any event that is not in the best interest of the City of Raleigh. This can include events that have unfavorable reviews from other cities as well as any event that otherwise is not in the best interest of the City.
- vi. "Grandfathering" of existing events. Events that were scheduled prior to February 7, 2013 with temporary street closings approved by City Council that conflicted with the City of Raleigh Special Event Policy were allowed to continue reserving the same date in subsequent years as long as the event received an acceptable evaluation. The City eliminated the grandfathering period effective January 1, 2016 to further reduce the impacts on community members. Event organizers were advised to seek alternate dates and locations and if a resolution between organizers could not be agreed upon, the City had the final determination on which events were required to move. The determination of priority was given firstly to events with contracts or sponsorship with the City or Greater Raleigh Convention and Visitor's Bureau, secondly to events with more positive performance evaluations, and finally by utilizing a lottery-based system to determine the selection of dates.

B. General Events, Neighborhood Block Parties, and Filming.

- i. Overall limitation on events. While there is no cap on the number of general events, neighborhood block parties, or film production, the Special Events Office has the discretion to disallow any event if it will create an undue burden on a particular geographic area or the City as a whole.
- ii. Limitation on events that are not in the best interest of the City. The Special Events Office has the discretion to disallow any event that is not in the best interest of the City of Raleigh. This can include events that have unfavorable reviews from other cities as well as any event that otherwise is not in the best interest of the City.

5. Annual Policy Review:

Each year City staff will review the Special Event Policy in the light of the prior years' experience and solicit the input of stakeholders. Suggested changes, if any, will be forwarded to City Council for approval.