



Founders Day Festival Parade

February 17, 2026

Statement from Mayor Bill Foulds, Jr.

We've had some questions regarding the changes to the Founders Day Festival parade. The Founders Day Parade has long been a treasured tradition. For many, it holds decades of memories, laughter, and connection. We understand that changes to something so meaningful can feel disappointing, and we want you to know that those feelings are heard and respected.

The decision to transition from float entries to a walking parade was not made lightly. It was made after extensive consultations with local first responders and those overseeing the safety of our residents and visitors. It was made after careful consideration and in alignment with current safety guidance and operational realities. Our highest responsibility is, and always will be, the safety of our residents, participants, and visitors.

Switching from a traditional float-based parade to a walking-only parade can significantly reduce safety risks for participants and spectators. Motorized floats introduce hazards such as limited driver visibility, mechanical failure, accidental acceleration, and the potential for pedestrians — especially children — to move unpredictably near moving vehicles. Even at low speeds, large vehicles operating in crowded environments create a higher likelihood of injury. A walking-only format eliminates the risk of vehicle-related accidents, simplifies route management, and reduces the need for heavy barricading and complex traffic control plans. It also decreases liability exposure for the city by removing heavy equipment, trailers, generators, and elevated riders from the event footprint.

From a security perspective, a walking parade is easier to monitor, staff, and control. Law enforcement and event personnel can more effectively observe participants without large floats obstructing sightlines or creating blind spots. The absence of vehicles also reduces concerns about intentional vehicle misuse in a crowded setting. A walking format allows for tighter spacing, quicker emergency access, and more flexible response options if medical or security issues arise. Overall, transitioning to a pedestrian-only parade enhances public safety, improves situational awareness, and creates a more manageable environment for city staff, first responders, and event organizers.

What makes our parade special has never been the wheels beneath it, but the people within it. The creativity, the spirit, and the pride of our community will continue to shine just as brightly in this new format.

Change can be difficult, especially when it involves something we love. But we truly believe this is an opportunity to evolve the tradition in a way that keeps it safe, sustainable, and strong for years to come.

We invite our community to walk with us, celebrate with us, and help write this next chapter together.