

Public Special Events Sponsorship



Effective Date: TBD	Last Updated: N/A	Endorsed By: Parks and Recreation Commission TBD/2022
Code and Statutory Authority: MICC 4.44.010 MICC 3.53.020	Related Polices: Strategy for MICEC and Recreation Programs and Services (“Strategy”)	

Purpose

The City of Mercer Island recognizes that public special events are an important part of the community’s life, and that the municipality can play a central role in facilitating those enriching experiences. These events extend public benefits such as entertainment, a sense of community, opportunities to celebrate and honor, self-expression, recreation, learning, and memory-making. Public special events may also have the potential to boost economic vitality and advance community goals.

The City desires to promote other entities’ abilities to bring special events to fruition, while balancing the City’s cost recovery and resource allocation goals. This policy describes a sponsorship program that enables the City to assist public special event permit applicants, beyond processing and issuing a permit and providing fee-compensated City services.

Scope/Background

The City’s role in fostering public special events is multi-dimensional and is governed by policy, the biennial budget and administrative protocol. The City organizes, funds and conducts several public special events throughout the year. In addition, the City provides permitting and oversight of events offered by other entities that are held in whole or in part on public property or rights-of-way, which would impact or interfere with standard, ordinary and normal use of either public property or normal vehicle and pedestrian traffic in the vicinity of the event, and/or requires use of City services.

Per City Code, the Department Director establishes a fee schedule for the programs and services offered by the Division. That fee schedule is periodically updated, is published on the Division’s webpages, and is distributed annually to the Parks and Recreation Commission. The Department Director establishes fees for the permitting process and for any City services rendered to third party special events, in accordance with the cost recovery and resource allocation philosophy that is outlined in the Recreation Division’s *Strategy*.¹

Articulating the plan for and rules surrounding the City’s use tax-funded resources or non-collection of fee revenue enhances the City’s ability to act consistently in accordance with approved policy and with the appropriate use of public funds.

Definitions

1. “Division” means Mercer Island Recreation Division.

¹ *Strategy for Mercer Island Community and Event Center & Recreation Programs and Services*

2. “Cost recovery” means the degree to which the operational costs of providing a program or service are supported by user fees and/or other funding mechanisms such as grants, partnerships, donations, sponsorships, or other alternative (non-tax) funding sources.
3. The “event fee” means the combined fee used to recover the costs associated with reviewing the special events permit application and other administrative tasks, plus the fee that represents reserved use of the public space. The event fee does not include the application fee nor any additional fees or costs that might be charged or invoiced for other permits or City services rendered.
4. The “Special Events Guidelines” means the instruction manual that describes the special events rules and procedures for all potential permit applicants.
5. “Resource allocation philosophy” means the guidance for which programs and services should be offered, why and with what resources (e.g., facility space, staff time, tax support, user fee funding).
6. “Strategy” means the *Strategy for Mercer Island Community and Event Center & Recreation Programs and Services (also known as the Reset Strategy)* endorsed by the Parks and Recreation Commission in April 2021 and City Council in July 2021.
7. “Non-profit agency” means a tax-exempt nonprofit corporation described by §501(c)(3), (4), or (10) of the Internal Revenue Code or a nonprofit organization, group, or individual that would qualify for tax exemption under these codes except that it is not organized as a nonprofit corporation.
8. “Non-profit agency serving Mercer Island residents” means an agency where Mercer Island residents constitute greater than 75% of local membership or local service recipients.

Policy

- The City provides fee waivers or fee reductions for public events where the applicant/event organizing/hosting entity is a non-profit agency serving Mercer Island residents and the event meets all other sponsorship program rules.
- Requests for City sponsorship can be made at any time but must be made concurrent with applying for a special event permit (and any other required permits) and in accordance with the City’s special event application review deadlines.
- Fee waivers, reductions or City contributions shall not be granted for events that fail to submit completed permit applications by the review deadlines.
- To be eligible for City sponsorship, applicants must attest that the event will be open to the public (not private) and inclusive in nature.
- The City will not sponsor political parties, politically-based organizations or lobbying groups.
- The City will not sponsor events that include religious worship, religious instruction, proselytization or inherently religious activities. Cultural celebrations, historical event commemorations and other non-religious public events organized by faith-based organizations may be eligible for sponsorship.
- The City will not sponsor sports tournaments.
- The City will not sponsor any event that does not seek to advance the sense of community, health, wellness or safety of the public, or that is inconsistent with the Recreation Division’s mission to enhance livability for all Mercer Island residents.
- Sponsored events may be used as fundraisers and may require a registration or participation fee.

- Each entity may only receive sponsorship two times per year.
- Each sponsored entity must enter into a contract with the City. This contract will stipulate additional conditions and describe the public benefit received by the City in sponsoring the event.
- Fee waivers and reductions are not applicable to additional fees and charges.

As applicable, the special event sponsorship program fee waivers and reductions will consist of: The City waiving the event fee for a Level 1 event; the City providing a 60% discount on the event fee for a Level 2 event, the City providing a 40% discount on the event fee for a Level 3 event, or the City providing a 20% discount on the event fee for a Level 4 event. The “level of event” corresponds to the type, size, scope and anticipated and/or historic impact of an event. The definition of each level is subject to modification as new event types, park use limitations, event impacts and other factors develop or change over time. Therefore, the definitions of each “level of event” will be established by City staff in the Special Events Guidelines and the published fee schedule.

Level of Event	Sponsorship
Level 1	100% waiver of event fee
Level 2	60% reduction of event fee
Level 3	40% reduction of event fee
Level 4	20% reduction of event fee

Procedure(s)

City staff designated by the Division Manager will review the special event application and request for sponsorship and will determine permit and sponsorship eligibility and award.

All other procedures will be established and approved administratively by the Department Director and Division Manager.