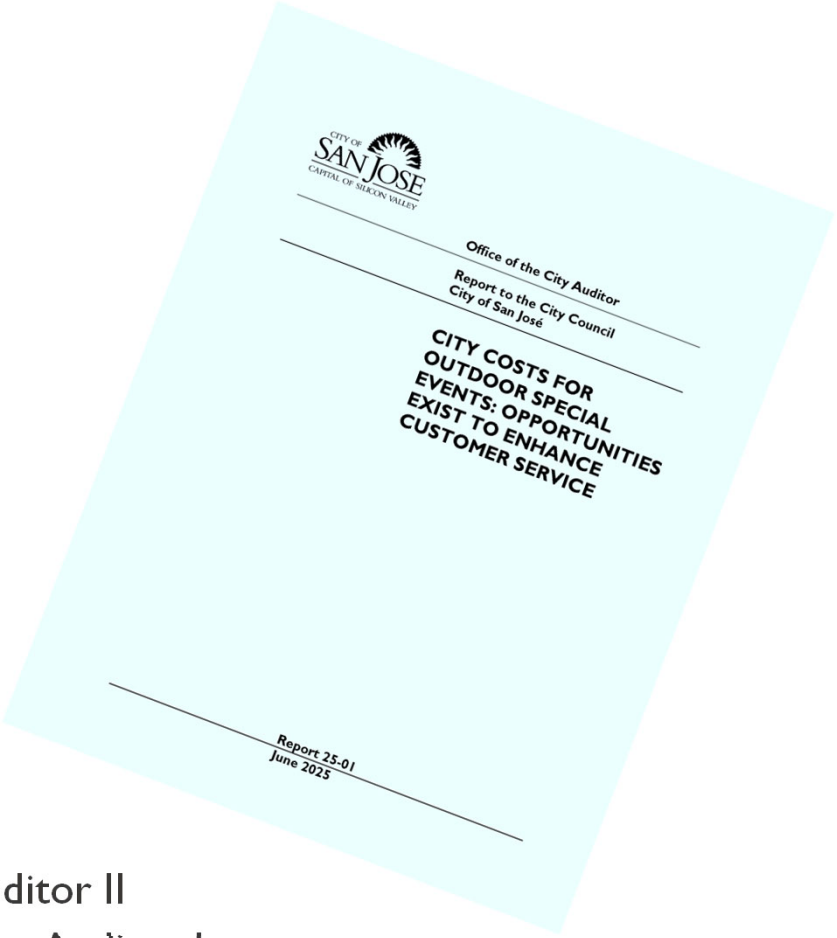
CITY COSTS FOR OUTDOOR SPECIAL EVENTS: OPPORTUNITIES EXIST TO ENHANCE CUSTOMER SERVICE



A Report from the City Auditor
Issued June 2025
http://www.sanjoseca.gov/auditor

Presenters: Joe Rois, City Auditor
Brittney Harvey, Supervising Auditor
Michael O'Connell Jr., Program Performance Auditor II
Dilnoza Khudoyberganova, Program Performance Auditor I

Community & Economic Development Committee, June 16, 2025
Item (d)1

Background

- In FY 2023-24, **84** outdoor special events required permits and services from multiple City departments.
- Estimated attendance totaled **330,000** attendees over **300** event days.
- City costs totaled **$622,000** total City cost—labor costs were the biggest driver, totaling **$436,000**.

Police Staffed at an Intersection for an Event

Source: Auditor photo at the 2025 Shamrock Run.

Finding 1: More Transparent and Predictable Police Staffing Costs Can Help Event Organizers

- Police staffing costs accounted for 51% of overall City costs.
- Cost estimates are not consistently provided and not all rates charged were posted on the special events webpage.
- Fully staffing sworn personnel at events has been a persistent challenge.
- Roles and responsibilities for sworn officers, non-sworn staff, and private security are not clearly defined.

Recommendations: The Administration and the Police Department should:

→ Identify a threshold for which cost estimates are to be required

→ Update the City's website for sworn and non-sworn rates

→ Update the Special Event Guidelines to define and prioritize roles for private security and non-sworn staff

Finding 2: Improving Coordination in the Event Process May Help Enhance Customer Service

- The current process meets some of the goals of the City's Customer Service Vision and Standards.
- Separate invoices and different billing processes for each department.
- Organizers may receive multiple invoices from the same department months apart.

Recommendations: The Administration and OEDCA should:

→ Assess how the City can better coordinate the permitting process, potentially through a technological solution.

→ Formalize OEDCA's procedures to follow up with departments around timely invoicing.

Conclusion

This report has 4 recommendations to improve cost transparency and staffing levels for outdoor special events.

We would like to thank the Office of Economic Development and Cultural Affairs; the Police Department; the Department of Transportation; the Department of Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services; the Fire Department; and the City Attorney's Office. The audit report is available at www.sanjoseca.gov/auditor

Audit staff: Brittney Harvey, Michael O'Connell Jr., & Dilnoza Khudoyberganova