When is an Outdoor Special Event Permit required?

The most common types of events requiring an Outdoor Special Event Permit are:

- Festivals, Carnivals, Concerts & Block Parties
- Parades, Organized Walks/Runs/Races
- Professional – Commercial Filming/Photography

As well as any organized activity containing one or more of the following:

- Estimated attendance exceeds 25
- Specific area(s) need to be reserved
- Includes street and/or sidewalk closures
- Includes addition of temporary structures
- Requires APD assistance for traffic control
- Includes alcoholic beverages
- Includes fireworks or open flames

Where is the best location for my outdoor special event?

Many issues come into play when considering a new event location. The existing infrastructure at a park versus the cost of developing an event on a street may prove the deciding factor. While most parks and greenways in Asheville are open year-round, most outdoor restroom facilities and power to various exterior outlets and lights are closed during winter months due freezing temperatures. As such, additional costs for portable restrooms, generators and light towers at parks may need to be planned for events scheduled during winter months.

Street closures are rarely approved for recreational closures on weekdays. The day and time of the event as well as set-up requirements may prohibit the event from occurring on a street. Streets do not commonly contain electricity or water access. DOT roadways and streets with public transportation routes are typically unavailable for closure. When an event-related street closure is requested and the street is adjacent to park property, the park must be reserved instead of or in addition to the street closure.

There are two parks within the central business district that are best suited for outdoor special events. Our newest, Pack Square Park is divided into three designated event areas, the green, the terrace and the square.

Pack Square Park – Roger McGuire Green & Reuter Terrace: The ***Roger McGuire Green*** is our largest downtown event space located at the east end of Pack Square Park. This park features an open lawn, 20x30 performance stage and 'Splashville' water play area. Behind stage, the *City-County parking lot may be available for closure outside normal business hours with appropriate parking meter closure and lot staffing service fees. Pack Square Park continues across Spruce Street with Reuter Terrace. ***Reuter Terrace*** consists of several linear terraced lawns and a small performance area above. Reuter Terrace is separated from Pack Square Park's restroom and visitor pavilion by a public walkway and terraced water feature.

Pack Square Park – Pack Square: The ***Vance Monument Median*** is a public plaza within the square at the west end of Pack Square Park. The ***Raised Lawn*** is a small, shaded lawn south of the Biltmore Building. The street of North Pack Square divides the two areas and may be closed to create one continuous event space. Consideration for street closure is granted during weekend hours only – the street of South Pack Square may additionally be closed on Sundays, allowing for full use of Pack Square. The Vance Monument Median is not available for reservation without a street closure for public safety. Parking meter closure fees may apply.

Pritchard Park: Steps below surface level, this small park is at the heart of the downtown business district and home to the Asheville Drum Circle. This space is best for low volume performances and small gatherings.

Is a permit necessary for a protest or a rally?

The City of Asheville encourages free expression of ideas. As part of a citizen's right to protest, an Outdoor Special Event Permit is not required for independent, non-commercial speech activity. Some spaces are limited in size, are used for more than one purpose, or present special public safety concerns. Non-permitted activities that interfere with other scheduled/permitted uses, or that compromise the safety of the participants or public may be directed to alternate locations. Advance notice to the Outdoor Special Events office is recommended.

An organized rally, versus an independent protest, will typically include elements that *do* require special permitting. A larger, organized gathering versus an independent, non-commercial speech activity may place the producer in a position of liability for public safety and accommodation including the development of an emergency action plan. Commonly regulated event components such as structural additions, street, sidewalk and parking closures, electricity access, as well as specific reservations of property require approval through the permitting process.

What are the most common application forms needed for outdoor special event permitting?

Submitting an application to hold a special event within outdoor public spaces requires a combination of supplied forms and self-composed attachments based on the size, type, location and other variables of the event. The term "form" refers to specific templates/forms that are provided by the City, to be completed by the event organizer. The term "attachments" refers to unique items that must be composed or provided by the applicant to support the application as a whole. The Outdoor Special Event Permit Application is a form that serves as the coversheet to all secondary forms and attachments. The Outdoor Special Event Permit Application contains a submittal checklist on the final page outlining the most common forms and attachments that are typically required to complete the submittal.

Where do I submit the permit application paperwork once completed?

The Outdoor Special Events office at the Development Services Center oversees the permitting process relating to use of outdoor public space for special events. The Outdoor Special Events office acts as the liaison to the various internal departments involved with each aspect of event approval. The Outdoor Special Events office will work with the event organizer in obtaining all necessary approvals, arrange for any appointments with department representatives, and will issue the final documents once all supporting approvals are granted.

All application forms, supporting documents/attachments and the $25 application fee (or flat-rate $50 block party fee) should be submitted to the Outdoor Special Events office at the Development Services Center. Please call ahead to schedule an appointment if a review of the submittal or assistance in completing the application paperwork is needed. The Development Services Center is open Monday – Thursday, 7:30am – 5:30pm.

City of Asheville – Development Services Center
Attn: Jon Fillman, Outdoor Special Events
P.O. Box 7148 (Physical Address: Public Works Building, 161 S. Charlotte St., 28801)
Asheville, NC 28802
828-259-5738 (direct phone)
828-259-5676 (fax)
jfillman@ashevillenc.gov (email)

When will I receive the final permits for my event?

The Outdoor Special Event Permit is the final 'seal of approval' for all outdoor special events and is issued once all supporting permits are fully processed and approved by individual departments as applicable. Due to the inherent nature of special event production, it is common for permits to be issued only days prior to the event. For advance advertising and planning purposes, preliminary (conditional) approval may be granted within one-week of receipt of a fully completed event application.
Preliminary approval is obtained through the Outdoor Special Events office and based on an initial review of the plans disclosed within the application paperwork.

How do I obtain a lease, deed or rental agreement for the North Carolina Alcoholic Beverage Control Commission's Special One-Time Permit Application (for sale/consumption of alcoholic beverages?)

Once preliminary approval is granted by the Outdoor Special Events office, the event organizer may request a temporary space lease for the purpose of securing advance permissions and approvals. This is not a permit for the event but rather a document that serves as proof of a preliminary hold on the space and date of request.

How do I reach a City of Asheville department directly?

While the Outdoor Special Events office oversees the permitting process relating to use of outdoor public space for special events, it is often helpful to know how to reach the individual departments who are responsible for approving each component of an event application.

Asheville Parks, Recreation & Cultural Arts/APRCA	
General Administration	828-259-5800
City-Produced Festivals	828-259-5841
Athletic Programs/Facilities	828-251-4024
Park Maintenance Services	828-251-4050
Development Services Center/DSC	828-259-5846
Outdoor Special Events	828-259-5738
Building Safety	
Electrical	
Fire Prevention	
Fireworks & Open Flames	
Planning & Development	
Asheville Police Department/APD	828-252-1110
Asheville Fire Department/AFD	828-259-5640
Transportation Department *(Street/Sidewalk Closures)*	828-259-5943
Parking Services *(Parking Meters)*	828-259-5792
Asheville Transit Department	828-253-5691
Streets Department *(Barricades/Cones/Sanitation)*	828-259-5852
Water Department *(Hydrant Meters)*	828-251-1122
Risk Management	828-259-5684