



# SPECIAL EVENTS PLANNING GUIDE

## City of Lowell

Office of Cultural Affairs & Special Events  
375 Merrimack Street, Room 7  
Lowell, MA 01852  
Phone: (978) 674-1482  
Email: [case@lowellma.gov](mailto:case@lowellma.gov)



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[lowellma.gov/1408/Events](https://lowellma.gov/1408/Events)

**#LOWELL**  
THERE'S  
A LOT TO *like.*





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## About this Guide

The City of Lowell is proud to host a range of special events that enrich and energize our community. The Office of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (CASE) provides logistical support for large and small events, including the Lowell Folk Festival, Lowell Kinetic Sculpture Race, Baystate Marathon, Puerto Rican Festival, and Southeast Asian Water Festival.

This guide is a resource to help you with your event permitting process. If you still have questions after reviewing the content of this guide, please reach out to the Special Event Coordinator at [rdei@lowellma.gov](mailto:rdei@lowellma.gov).



Photo credit: Henry Marte



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## I. SPECIAL EVENT PERMIT OVERVIEW

The Office of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (CASE) processes One Day Special Event Permit Applications (\$25 processing fee), Multi-Day Special Event Permit Applications (\$25 processing fee per day), and Street Closure Applications (\$75 processing fee) for events in Lowell. Fees are due when the application is submitted and payable by check or money order.

Please note the following information:

Applicants seeking to utilize Boarding House Park, Mack Plaza, Heritage State Park, and City parks and playgrounds must apply through different agencies and departments. See Section IX for more information.

## II. STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS

### Step A: Obtain Application Materials and Information

Small scale events and road races require 2 months advance notification. Larger scale events, such as major festivals with over 500 attendees, require 6 months advance notice. If an event is cancelled or postponed, notify CASE at least one (1) week prior to the event. The event producer must provide the following materials to the CASE Office:

- Special Event Permit Application (one-day or multi-day)
- Special Event Permit Fee via check or money order
- Signed Special Event Agreement
- Map of the event footprint including electricity needs and vendor locations. No changes can be made to the map after permit approval
- Certificate of Insurance naming the City of Lowell as additionally insured for a minimum of \$1,000,000
- If the event contains food and/or beverages: Security Deposit to be provided to the Division of Development Services
- If the event requires street closures: Special Event Street Closing Application
- If the event is a road race: route map and detailed safety plan

Event plans must consider inclement weather, whether alcohol will be served (see Section III), and expected number of participants and spectators.

### Step B: Submit Application

Submit completed permit applications by emailing [case@lowellma.gov](mailto:case@lowellma.gov) or bringing a printed copy to the CASE Office along with the permit fee, Special Event Agreement, event map, and Certificate of Insurance. Applications are available on the City's website and in the CASE Office.

CASE staff will direct applicants to other departments for additional permits, permissions, licenses, or fees. It is the responsibility of the applicant to secure all necessary permits.



### III. LICENSE COMMISSION

The Lowell License Commission provides permits and licenses related to alcohol, outdoor amplification systems, sidewalk stands, and carnivals. Event organizers should discuss plans with the License Commission (978-674-4156) early in the planning process.

Applicants are advised to submit applications and fees a minimum of three (3) weeks prior to the event. Please note: a request for a license or permit requires the applicant appear before the License Commission to answer questions about their event. Meetings are held every two or three weeks on Thursdays at 6:00 PM in the City Council Chamber. Contact the License Commissioner at least four (4) business days before the next meeting to join the agenda.

Prior to appearing before the License Commission, the applicant will need the approval of the CASE Office, Police Department, Fire Department, Inspectional Services, Health Department, Department of Public Works, and/or the Board of Parks.

#### A. Alcoholic Beverages

Sale and service of alcohol requires a one-day license from the License Commission. It is illegal in the City of Lowell to sell, serve, and consume alcoholic beverages on public property or in public without a license. The outdoor area is to be enclosed by fencing or another barrier set-up for the purpose of restricting the removal of alcoholic beverages by patrons/guests. The applicant, as an individual or as the responsible manager for an organization, agrees to control the dispensing of alcohol to persons who are at least twenty-one (21) years old and that there is to be no service of alcohol to individuals who are or appear to be under the influence of alcohol.

Individuals/Organizations who wish to hold an alcohol event on public property are required to have a minimum of \$500,000 liquor liability insurance with the City of Lowell as additionally insured.

#### B. Amplification

The City of Lowell Noise Ordinance allows the License Commission to grant amplification of sound permits for special events. The permit is specific to a special event, not for a family event on private property. The ordinance restricts the hours to the following:

- Sunday to Wednesday - 10 AM to 10 PM
- Thursday to Saturday - 10 AM to 12 AM (midnight)



## C. Sidewalk Stands

Business owners may request a permit from the License Commission for the following:

- Single day only (fee, \$5.00)
- Seasonal permit (fee, \$25.00)

## D. Carnival License

Carnival licensing is handled by the License Commission and requires certifications from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for each of the rides and games. Contact the License Commission to begin the process as soon as possible.

## IV. CARNIVAL RIDES - STATE LAW

Massachusetts law requires that all amusement devices must be licensed and are regulated and inspected by the Office of Public Safety and Inspection. Amusement devices in Massachusetts are regulated by the Amusement Advisory Board.

Prior to contacting the Office of Public Safety and Inspection, discuss carnival plans with the Lowell License Commission.

## V. DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

The Development Services/Health Department provides permits and inspections for food, tents, and electricity at events.

### A. Food

A completed Temporary Food Establishment Permit Application and employees log must be provided to the Development Services/Health Department at least thirty (30) days before an event. A vendor without a licensed facility of their own must complete a Licensed Food Establishment Form. Refer to the General Guide to Temporary Food and Festival Events Information for details.

### B. Tents

Development Services requires a permit for a tent equal to or greater than 400 square feet. If your event includes tents of this size, you must contact the Building Commissioner to review plans, file a permit, and schedule a tent inspection.

### C. Electricity

Any electrical requirements and plans must be reviewed by the Wiring Inspector. If your event utilizes tent lighting, sound systems, a generator, or other electrical equipment, you must contact the Wiring Inspector.



## VI. PUBLIC SAFETY

### A. Fire Department

The Fire Department must be notified two (2) weeks prior to the use of propane tanks for cooking or heating. The use of propane tanks requires a gas permit and a fire detail to be on site for the duration of the event.

Anyone using fireworks must notify the Fire Department fifteen (15) days prior to when the fireworks arrive. The permit must include the duration of the fireworks from arrival to removal of the fireworks.

For heated tents or tents that hold fifty (50) or more people, a fire detail must be on site.

### B. Police Department

A police detail is required for all road races and may be required for other events. This determination will be made by the Lowell Police Department in consultation with the Special Events Coordinator. The hiring of police detail and all expenses are the responsibility of the festival organizer.

Only non-profit organizations may use volunteer auxiliary police; however, the Lowell Police Department must be notified and at least one patrol supervisor must be on site.

## VII. SOLID WASTE AND RECYCLING

The Solid Waste and Recycling Division of the Department of Public Works must be notified at least four (4) weeks before a large event, three (3) weeks for medium sized events, and two (2) weeks for small events. Collection containers for waste and recycling are required and may be available for rent. It is state law to provide recycling at all events and festivals, and recent updates to Lowell Ordinance (Ch 9) include recycling requirements.



## VIII. PARKING DEPARTMENT

The Parking Department needs to be notified two (2) weeks before a large event in the downtown area in order to staff the garages. If your event requires the reservation or blocking of parking spaces, you must contact the Parking Department.

## IX. PERMIT BY EVENT LOCATION

Please note that other entities permit certain locations. After securing permission from these entities, contact the Special Events Coordinator to determine what City services or other permits may be required.

### A. City Parks and Playgrounds

To host an event at a park or playground, you must apply to the Board of Parks. The Board of Parks will act on the application and will notify applicants of their requirements prior to issuing a permit. The Board of Parks meets on the last Wednesday of the month at 6:00 PM in the Recreation Conference Room, 107 Merrimack St. 4th Floor.

### B. Heritage State Park and Mack Plaza

To host an event at the Vandenberg Esplanade, Sampas Pavilion, or Mack Plaza, secure permission from the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation.

### C. Boarding House Park

To host an event at Boarding House Park, you will need to secure permission from the National Park Service.



## X. COMMON EVENT FEATURES & QUESTIONS

### A. Street Closures

The closing of public ways requires a Street Closing Permit from the CASE Office. The Special Events Coordinator will facilitate the permit process and determine what is necessary to close the public way in coordination with other City departments. A permit fee of \$75 and a certificate of insurance naming the City of Lowell as additionally insured for a minimum of \$1,000,000 is required to obtain a Street Closing Permit.

### B. Police & Traffic

Some events may require police detail. This determination will be made by the Lowell Police Department in consultation with the Special Event Coordinator. All expenses are the responsibility of the applicant. See Section VI for more information.

### C. Fire Safety Requirements

Applicant is responsible for all fire safety requirements at the discretion of the Lowell Fire Department. Fire Department inspectors may make site inspections and may add additional requirements for safety. All expenses are the responsibility of the applicant. See Section VI for more information.

### D. Fees

Applicants are responsible for paying all fees, including the payment for services provided by the City, within three (3) weeks of the event. Any outstanding balances will result in applicants not being able to obtain future permits.

### E. Certificate of Insurance

Unless otherwise waived by the City of Lowell, applicant must submit proof of a minimum of \$1,000,000 [one million dollars] liability insurance naming the City of Lowell as additionally insured upon submitting a permit. The certificate holder must be the City of Lowell, 375 Merrimack Street, Lowell, MA 01852.

### F. Portable Toilets

Portable toilets are generally required at most events. Any event expecting more than 100 people must discuss their plans concerning portable toilets with the CASE Office when applying for a Special Event Permit, and the Special Events Coordinator will determine the number of facilities required. It is the responsibility of the applicant to supply those units at their expense.

### G. Typical Event Items

Unless otherwise agreed upon by the City, the applicant is required to secure portable toilets, tents, tent weights, tables, chairs, and music amplification systems for the event at the applicant's sole expense. The City is not responsible for damage inflicted on the applicant's property.



## **H. Food**

The vending of food at an event may require a permit from the Development Services/Health Department. See Section V for more information.

## **I. Private Property**

A Special Events Permit is not required for events on private land, however, a noise amplification license, vendor permit, liquor license, or street closing permit may be necessary.

## **J. Events on J.F.K. Plaza**

Events on J.F.K Plaza are permitted and booked through the CASE Office. Events at this space are to be conducted no earlier than 7:00 AM and no later than 9:00 PM. Hours of operation at other locations will be determined by the Special Events Coordinator.

## **K. Community Calendar**

To promote an event, we recommend submitting it to the City of Lowell's community calendar at [likelowell.com/calendar](http://likelowell.com/calendar). Some restrictions may apply.



## XI. DEPARTMENT CONTACT INFORMATION

### **Cultural Affairs & Special Events (CASE) Office**

375 Merrimack Street, Room 7, City Hall  
Lowell, MA 01852  
likelowell.com  
lowellma.gov/446/Cultural-Affairs-Special-Events  
Special Events Coordinator: (978) 674-1482

### **Development Services**

375 Merrimack Street, Room 55, City Hall  
Lowell, MA 01852  
lowellma.gov/580/Development-Services  
lowellma.gov/1463/Outdoor-Restaurant-and-Retail-ORR  
(978) 674-4144

### **Fire Prevention**

341 Pine Street, 1st Floor  
Lowell, MA 01854  
lowellma.gov/252/Fire-Prevention  
(978) 674-4594

### **License Commission**

c/o Law Department  
375 Merrimack Street, 3rd Floor, City Hall  
lowellma.gov/433/License-Commission  
Lowell, MA 01852  
jpyers@lowellma.gov  
(978) 674-4156

### **Massachusetts Department of Conservation & Recreation**

Heritage State Park (Vandenberg Esplanade and Sampas Pavilion) and Mack Plaza  
mass.gov/locations/lowell-heritage-state-park  
(978) 369-6312

### **Massachusetts Office of Safety and Inspections**

mass.gov/amusements-challenge-course-climbing-wall-and-inflatables-licensing  
(617) 727-3200



## **National Historical Park**

67 Kirk Street

Lowell, MA 01852

[nps.gov/lowe/planyourvisit/permitsandreservations.htm](https://nps.gov/lowe/planyourvisit/permitsandreservations.htm)

Special Use Permit Coordinator: (978) 970-5000

## **Parking Department**

75 John Street

Lowell, MA 01852

[lowellma.gov/450/Parking-Garages](https://lowellma.gov/450/Parking-Garages)

(978) 674-1566

## **Parks & Recreation / Board of Parks**

107 Merrimack Street, 4th Floor

Lowell, MA 01852

(978) 674-4175

[lowellma.myrec.com](https://lowellma.myrec.com)

## **Police Department**

50 Arcand Drive

Lowell, MA 01852

Communications Center: (978) 674-3200

Traffic Division: (978) 674-4505

Detail Office: (978) 674-4503

## **Public Works: Electrical and Facilities Maintenance**

1361 Middlesex Street

Lowell, MA 01852

All Divisions: (978) 674-1802

Solid Waste & Recycling: (978) 674-4309