

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Special Event Zone Ordinance, Sign Code Requirements & Vendor Regulations

General

1. Why is the City proposing this ordinance?

To support public safety, emergency access, mobility management, and orderly operations during global-scale events that bring heavy crowds, media, and commercial activity. The ordinance supplements existing City Code to help manage increased activity in areas most impacted by major international events such as Super Bowl LX and the FIFA World Cup.

2. Will this affect residents and businesses?

Only those located in or adjacent to the Special Event Zone, and only during designated activation periods. Outside the zone or outside activation timelines, normal City regulations apply.

3. Does the ordinance replace existing City laws?

No. The Ordinance works in addition to existing City codes. Businesses, residents, and vendors must continue to comply with the City's Sign Code, zoning requirements, noise regulations, and other public safety laws.

Signage & Advertising

4. Can existing businesses keep their current signs during the Special Event Zone activation period?

Yes. All existing, legally permitted permanent signs, including wall signs, window signs, and monument signs, may remain in place during the activation period. No changes are required for signage already approved through the normal permitting process.

5. Can businesses put up temporary signs, banners, or promotional materials?

Temporary commercial signs, such as banners, flags, inflatables, portable signs, window wraps, or LED promotional displays, are not allowed within the Special Event Zone unless they:

- Qualify as exempt signs under Santa Clara Zoning Code §18.42.070, or
- Have received a valid sign permit under Zoning Code Chapter 18.42.

6. What types of signs are already prohibited citywide (even outside the Special Event Zone)?

Under Santa Clara's Sign Code (§18.42.080), the following signs are prohibited throughout the entire City, unless otherwise specified in the Zoning Code:

- Animated signs (blinking or flashing lights)
- Banners, pennants, streamers, feather flags, statuary, and other similar devices
- Billboards
- Reconstructed nonconforming signs beyond allowed limits
- Red, green, blue, or amber lights that may be confused with traffic signals
- Portable signs (including signs on operable vehicles)
- Signs emitting sound or foreign material
- Signs placed on natural features (trees, rocks, hills, etc.)
- Roof signs and signs above the eave line
- Tethered balloons or inflatable advertising devices
- Neon or LED lighting outlining windows

These prohibitions apply at all times, not just during special events.

Vending Regulations

7. Can I operate inside the Special Event Zone during activation periods?

No. Peddlers and mobile vendors including those with valid sidewalk vending permits may not operate within the Special Event Zone during activation periods for Super Bowl LX. This is a temporary pause and applies only within the Zone.

8. Can I operate outside the Special Event Zone during activation periods?

Yes. Vendors may continue to operate anywhere outside the Special Event Zone, as long as they:

- Hold a valid vending permit,
- Comply with all placement, distance, and safety rules under Santa Clara City Code Chapter 5.05, and
- Follow all County health and food-handling regulations.

Your permit remains fully valid outside the Special Event Zone.

9. Can I move to another permitted location during activation periods?

Yes. If your approved location is inside the Special Event Zone, you may:

- Operate at any other permitted location listed on your permit, or
- Request information from the City on additional permissible areas outside the Zone.

The pause applies only to vending within the Zone, not citywide.

10. Why are vendors restricted from operating in the Zone during major events?

The City is implementing the ordinance to:

- Maintain emergency access
- Manage crowd movement and prevent congestion
- Reduce conflicts with pedestrian and traffic surges
- Reduce risks of counterfeit or unsafe merchandise

11. Are these regulations permanent?

No. The restrictions are:

- **Temporary** (only during activation periods),
- **Geographically limited** (only within the Special Event Zone), and
- **Event-specific** (tied to major global events).

Ordinance Access

12. Where can I read the full ordinance?

The full report and proposed ordinance were presented on **November 18, 2025**. An updated version will be presented to City Council on **December 9, 2025**. Once finalized, all materials will be available on the City's Special Event Zone webpage.