

REPORT TO COUNCIL

SUBJECT

..Title

Action on Introduction of a “Special Event Zone” Ordinance Regulating and Prohibiting Certain Activities within a Protected Area in Connection with the 2026 Major Events at Levi’s® Stadium

..Report

BACKGROUND

Since it opened in 2014, Levi’s® Stadium (Stadium) has hosted a number of large-scale events drawing statewide, national, and international attention. These include Super Bowl L in 2016, and the College Football Playoff National Championship in 2019. For such events, in order to support public safety, operations, traffic and operational logistics, and the general public health, safety and welfare of event goers and the surrounding community, the City implemented temporary “special event zone” regulations. Vendor congestion and counterfeit merchandising were also addressed.

The Stadium is scheduled to host two more global-scale events in 2026, Super Bowl LX in February and FIFA World Cup 2026 matches in June and July. Consistent with past practices, the City is again contemplating adopting temporary “special event zone” regulations to help support public safety, operations, traffic and operational logistics, and the general public health, safety and welfare of event goers and the surrounding community. Both the NFL and FIFA support such regulations, and the Stadium Authority and City agreements related to these events contemplate that City staff will prepare and present such regulations for City Council consideration and action.

City staff has now prepared an updated set of special event zone regulations that have been customized for Super Bowl LX and the FIFA World Cup (See Attachment 1). In preparing such regulations, aside from expert input from the Santa Clara Police Department, and other involved City staff, City staff also reviewed and incorporated provisions from recent sets of similar regulations enacted for major events held at other venues. NFL and FIFA input was also solicited. The resulting set of regulations, updated to be consistent with current “best practices,” are now presented for City Council consideration and action.

DISCUSSION

In General

The proposed Special Event Zone ordinance (“Special Event Zone”), prepared for use during certain designated special events at the Stadium, including the upcoming 2026 Major Events at the Stadium, is designed to advance four core objectives:

1. Public safety and emergency access in high-density areas;
2. Orderly operations around the Stadium and related sites;

3. Aesthetics and consumer protection, including combating counterfeit goods; and
4. Mobility management, reducing pedestrian and vehicular conflicts caused by unpermitted sidewalk sales and pop-up activations.

To achieve these objectives, the proposed Special Event Zone regulations have been narrowly tailored. For one, they only apply during designated event activation periods for each event (generally, just before, during and just after the events themselves). The regulations also only apply within the specified geographic areas expected to be impacted by event activities; for the 2026 Major Events these areas are shown on the attached **Exhibit A** (See Attachment 2). The ordinance also includes provisions that would allow for its regulations to apply to future major events through the adoption of a City Council resolution specific to such event(s).

In general, the ordinance pauses existing peddler permits within the Special Event Zone during activation; prohibits outdoor sales of food, beverage, or merchandise visible from streets/sidewalks unless part of an approved, permitted operation; prohibits mobile unit commercial vending; requires permits for temporary structures; restricts unpermitted giveaways/sampling; maintains existing permitting for parades/races/block events; and limits unpermitted commercial signs/advertising visible from public streets while preserving exempt signage and ordinary-course business activities at locations with appropriate City approvals. Enforcement is contemplated primarily through administrative remedies and citations, with targeted tools for counterfeit goods and other unlawful activity.

Specific key provisions of the Special Event Ordinance are summarized below.

Sidewalk Vending Permits

There are existing permitting processes for sidewalk vending, temporary outdoor uses, and special events on both public and private property in the City of Santa Clara. Sidewalk vending is regulated under Santa Clara City Code Chapter 5.05, which requires sidewalk vendors to obtain a valid permit issued through the Police Department Permits Unit and to comply with location, operations, and public safety standards. In addition, outdoor commercial activity and event programming may require approval through the City's special event permit process for activities occurring on public property, or a Temporary Use Permit under Santa Clara Zoning Code Chapter 18.110 for temporary commercial or assembly uses on private property.

During large-scale or high-attendance events, the City may apply time-limited restrictions on vending and outdoor commercial activities in order to maintain emergency access, prevent sidewalk congestion, and support coordinated public safety operations. The proposed Special Event Zone Ordinance establishes such a temporary framework. Within the Zone and only during designated activation periods, vending permits issued under Chapter 5.05 would be paused, and outdoor commercial activity would be limited unless part of a permitted special event or conducted by an existing

business operating in the ordinary course under a valid City entitlement. These measures help ensure that commercial activity within the Zone is organized, safe, and consistent with public safety planning for the 2026 Major Events.

While certain outdoor commercial activities will be temporarily suspended within the Special Event Zone during activation periods, the City will continue to encourage participation by local vendors and small businesses through permitted special event activations and business engagement opportunities coordinated in advance of the events. This approach ensures a fair and inclusive pathway for vendor participation while still supporting the public safety, mobility, and crowd-management objectives necessary during high-profile international events.

In addition to the regulations on sidewalk vending permits, other key regulations within the Special Event Zone include the following:

1. No outdoor merchandise sales visible from public areas, except by permitted fixed businesses; applies broadly to all types of merchandise.
2. No mobile-unit vending, including trucks, trailers, carts, pushcarts, bicycles, or any wheeled structure.
3. No sale or distribution of illegal or counterfeit goods, regardless of permitting status.
4. Temporary structures require City approval, including tents, canopies, inflatables, wireless equipment, or similar installations.
5. No free product sampling or giveaways, including promotional items, coupons, or commercial services, in outdoor or public areas.
6. Police permit required for any parade, march, race, procession, or block event held on public streets or public spaces.
7. Restrictions on outdoor advertising, including commercial signs, banners, inflatables, LED displays, projections, and mobile advertising, unless exempt or specifically permitted; normal advertising on taxis, buses, and delivery vehicles may continue.

Enforcement

Violations of this Ordinance shall be subject to enforcement through the administrative remedies provided in the Santa Clara City Code, with each day that a violation continues constituting a separate and distinct offense. Violations involving mobile-unit commercial vending within the public right-of-way or City-owned parks shall be penalized pursuant to Section 5.05.420, while all other violations may be prosecuted by administrative citation under Section 1.10.030. In addition to these remedies, the City may seek injunctive relief through the Superior Court, and nothing herein shall preclude

the City from pursuing any other enforcement actions or legal remedies available under state, federal, or common law for conduct that independently constitutes a violation of those laws.

Special Event Zone Area

The Special Event Zone boundary is focused on the streets, public access routes, and outdoor gathering areas in the vicinity of the Stadium and the adjoining entertainment and transit corridors. The boundary is designed to encompass the areas where the highest levels of pedestrian and vehicle activity are expected during major event operations, including the phases of event load-in, active event days, and post-event load-out. The Special Event Zone also includes key ingress and egress corridors that serve as primary access points for emergency response, transit services, rideshare operations, Stadium patron traffic, and credentialed event vehicles, ensuring that temporary commercial activities do not impede critical traffic flows.

For the Super Bowl LX and FIFA World Cup 2026, the Special Event Zone includes the Stadium, surrounding public rights-of-way, and adjacent event support areas that serve as primary pedestrian, transit, and vehicular circulation corridors. These areas are used extensively by attendees, staff, media, emergency personnel, and credentialed vendors during each stage of event operations. Prior to each event, large-scale load-in and staging operations will occur, involving the temporary setup of security screening areas, hospitality structures, broadcast compounds, temporary signage, fencing, and media infrastructure. During these periods, City departments and regional partners coordinate logistics for road closures, credentialed access control, and emergency response staging, including maintaining clear access to the Stadium that are essential for efficient and safe event operations.

The Special Event Zone also captures areas needed for multimodal access and spectator management, including the extensive surface parking areas, pedestrian routes, and shuttle and rideshare drop-off zones that support the Stadium and its surrounding activity centers. These facilities generate significant pedestrian movement before and after events, and the Special Event Zone ensures that unpermitted commercial activity does not interfere with safe pedestrian circulation or create spillover impacts into nearby residential neighborhoods. In addition, the Special Event Zone incorporates adjacent major activity hubs such as the Santa Clara Convention Center, California's Great America theme park, and the surrounding hotels, which are expected to host event-related programming, hospitality functions, credentialing centers, media operations, and fan activities throughout the Super Bowl and World Cup periods.

By establishing the Special Event Zone in advance, the City can ensure predictable and coordinated management of outdoor commercial activity, crowd movement, and emergency access throughout these high-impact periods. This geographic approach provides a consistent and transparent regulatory framework that aligns with prior major event practices in Santa Clara, enabling the City to safeguard public health, safety, and mobility while supporting efficient event operations and a positive experience for residents and visitors alike.

Special Event Zone Time Periods

- Super Bowl LX: Proposed activation February 1, 2026 (8:00 a.m.) – February 10, 2026 (10:00 p.m.).
- FIFA World Cup 2026: June 12, 2026 through July 1, 2026, to allow for 24 hours prior to kick-off of the first match day through midnight on final match day.
- Additional Special Events (if any): By separate Council resolution designating the event, dates, and any tailored adjustments.

Coordination and Outreach

The ordinance complements existing permitting (e.g., temporary outdoor uses, special events, encroachment permits) and interagency plans with the Bay Area Host Committee (BAHC), NFL/FIFA partners, Public Safety departments, and Public Works. Staff will implement a communications plan (website, social posts, community outreach, multilingual notices) to inform residents, vendors, and businesses well in advance of activations regarding these ordinance regulations.

Legal Considerations

The ordinance is content-neutral, time-limited, and narrowly tailored to specific locations and dates. It preserves the City's ability to authorize permitted activations that meet safety and coordination standards, maintains ordinary-course business operations for properly permitted, indoor/enclosed venues, and uses administrative remedies for efficient enforcement.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends the City Council introduce and waive the first reading of an uncodified ordinance to regulate certain activities within the Special Event Zone around the Stadium during limited activation periods in connection with major events. Adoption of the proposed ordinance implements measures that align with those interests and ensures the City's readiness for time-limited, geographically targeted regulations tied to special events, as defined within the Ordinance, including the Super Bowl LX and FIFA World Cup 2026 events. The ordinance is designed to protect public health and safety, maintain emergency access, and support orderly event operations by placing temporary restrictions on certain outdoor commercial activities and temporary structures within the Special Event Zone. The Special Event Zone, dates, and activation periods are tailored to the events both for time periods and geographic areas impacted. The ordinance mirrors best practices successfully used in Santa Clara for prior major events (e.g., Super Bowl 50, 2019 CFP National Championship) and in neighboring jurisdictions for 2026 readiness.

Next Steps. If introduced with the first reading waived, staff will return for final adoption at the next regular City Council meeting.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The action being considered does not constitute a “project” within the meaning of a California Environmental Quality Act (“CEQA”) pursuant to the CEQA Guidelines section 15378(a) as it has no potential for resulting in either a direct physical change in the environment, or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment. Even if adoption of the Ordinance was considered to be a project under CEQA, it would be exempt from CEQA review pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15061(b)(3) because it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that adoption of the Ordinance would have a significant effect on environment given that it does not involve or authorize any construction or physical activity that could impact the environment.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no General Fund impact anticipated beyond staff time to implement and enforce time-limited activations.

COORDINATION

This report and ordinance were coordinated with the City Manager’s Office, City Attorney’s Office, Police, Public Works, Community Development (Planning/Building/Code); Economic Development and Marketing; Communications; and the Stadium Authority.

PUBLIC CONTACT

Public contact was made by posting the Council agenda on the City’s official-notice bulletin board outside City Hall Council Chambers. A complete agenda packet is available on the City’s website and in the City Clerk’s Office at least 72 hours prior to a Regular Meeting and 24 hours prior to a Special Meeting. A hard copy of any agenda report may be requested by contacting the City Clerk’s Office at (408) 615-2220, email clerk@santaclaraca.gov or at the public information desk at any City of Santa Clara public library.

RECOMMENDATION

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Introduce an uncoded ordinance entitled “An Ordinance of the City of Santa Clara, California, Regulating Certain Activities within a Protected Area in Connection with Major Events and Related Activities in the City of Santa Clara,” waive first reading, and direct staff to return for final adoption at the next regular meeting, with authority for the City Attorney to make non-substantive edits.

..Staff

Reviewed by: Glen Googins, City Attorney

Approved by: Jovan Grogan, City Manager

ATTACHMENTS

1. Proposed Ordinance
2. Exhibit A – Special Event Zone Map