



C I T Y O F  
**RENO**  
Memorandum

---

**DATE:** 10/3/24  
**TO:** Mayor and City Council  
**THROUGH:** Jackie Bryant, Interim City Manager  
**FROM:** Bryan McArdle, Revitalization Manager  
**DEPT:** Economic Development  
**SUBJECT:** Special Events & Activation Update

---

This memo is to provide an update on the 2024 downtown activation and special events season.

This year, staff has made significant progress toward creating a vibrant and active Downtown Reno. Special events and programming continue to be key drivers of economic development, transforming vacant and underutilized spaces into active community areas. Staff continues to prioritize revitalizing downtown parks, plazas, and streets, with a focus on attracting new events and partnering with innovative promoters. This approach strengthens Reno's reputation as a dynamic and forward-thinking city focused on activities for locals and visitors alike.

Reflecting on the progress made this past year, it's important to revisit the downtown activation and special events goals. Staff designed these objectives to enhance Reno's cultural vibrancy, economic growth, and community engagement.

**Goals set in August 2023:**

- 20% year over year growth in special events
- 20% increase in special event sponsorship applications
- Increase in new promoter engagement
- Increase in the number of events that increase cultural awareness
- Stronger partnerships with University of Nevada, Reno

**Special Event Data (January 2024-December 2024)**

Through strategic planning and collaboration, Staff met key milestones in event growth, promoter engagement, and cultural programming. Below are the 2024 event season results:

- Total number of events in 2024: 220
- 29% Increase in events from 2023
  - (157 events in 2023)
- 40 New unique activations since August 2023
  - 24,000+ Attendees across these new events
- Introduced seven new cultural events
  - Increased cultural events by 120%

### **Activation Pilot Program for the 2024 Event Season:**

For the 2024 season, the City launched the City of Reno's "Activation Pilot Program," partnering with third-party event promoters to revitalize Downtown utilizing one-time funds from Room Tax. The goal was to transform underutilized parks and plazas into vibrant hubs that engage the community and foster unity among locals and visitors. By creating diverse events and breathing new life into vacant spaces, this program supports economic growth and enhances cultural identity. This program has been a great success, inspiring four new recurring activations in the heart of Downtown Reno. Details on these activations and photos are provided below.

- **Four new free recurring events Downtown.**
- **20 days of new activity Downtown.**
- **11,750+ visitors Downtown for these events.**
- **Funding Source: \$100k from Room Tax - Special Events Budget**
- ***Off the Rails -- a monthly summer concert series presented by OffBeat Music Festival***
  - 4 monthly events June - September
    - June 20<sup>th</sup>: Moondog Matinee Performance
    - July 18<sup>th</sup>: Tim Snider & Wolfgang Timber Performance
    - August 15<sup>th</sup>: Jeff Crosby Performance
    - September 19<sup>th</sup>: Tropo Magica Performance
  - Promoter: OffBeat Music Festival
  - Location: Locomotion Plaza
  - Attendance: Average attendance of 400 people per event (1,600 people total over the season)
- ***Dancing on the River -- a bi-monthly community cumbia dance event***
  - 8 bi-monthly events May-September
    - June 1<sup>st</sup> & June 22<sup>nd</sup>
    - July 6<sup>th</sup> & July 20<sup>th</sup>
    - August 3<sup>rd</sup>, August 17<sup>th</sup> & August 31<sup>st</sup>
    - September 21<sup>st</sup>
  - Promoter: Dancing on the River
  - Location: West St. Plaza
  - Attendance: Average attendance of 1,250 people per event (10,000 people total over the season)

- This event was such a huge success in their first season, that they will be moving to City Plaza next year as they have outgrown the footprint at West St. Plaza
- ***Flicks on the Bricks -- a monthly community movie night hosted by Cordillera Film Festival***
  - 3 monthly events August-October
    - August 2<sup>nd</sup>: Top Gun
    - September 6<sup>th</sup>: Jurassic Park
    - October 4<sup>th</sup>: Speed
  - Promoter: Cordillera Film Festival & Sierra Tap House
  - Location: West St. Plaza
  - Attendance: Average of 65 attendees per event (195 people total over the season)
- ***Harmony on the River -- a monthly community show by the Reno Philharmonic***
  - 4 monthly events June-September
    - June 13th
    - July 11th
    - August 8th
    - September 12th
  - Promoter: The Reno Philharmonic & Sierra Tap House
  - Location: West St. Plaza
  - Attendance: Average attendance of 100 guests per event (400 total over the season)

### **2025 Events Season Activation Plans:**

In 2025, there will be two new pilot programs launching to further activate Downtown utilizing two priority plazas: Locomotion Plaza and West Street Plaza. These initiatives will provide seed funding to support event promoters in transforming these spaces into vibrant community hubs. These events are funded by Council approved State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF). A call for promoters is currently posted. Building on the momentum of 2024, the goal is to foster dynamic programming that engages locals and visitors, fueling economic growth and enriching cultural experiences.

- **Six recurring events Downtown.**
- **71 days of new activity Downtown.**
- **Funding Source: SLFRF/ARPA funds**
  - \$310,000 (2025 + 2026) - Virginia Street Placemaking – Locomotion Plaza
  - \$150,000 (2025 + 2026) - Truckee River Plan – West Street Plaza
- ***The Great River Games – a weekly food truck and outdoor game night gathering***
  - 13 Weekly events June-August
  - Promoter: TBD
  - Location: West St. Plaza

- ***Harmony on the River -- a weekly community show by the Reno Philharmonic***
  - 13 Weekly events June-August
  - Promoter: The Reno Phil & Sierra Tap House
  - Location: West St. Plaza
- ***Flicks on the Bricks -- a monthly community movie night hosted by Cordillera Film Festival***
  - 3 Monthly events August-October
  - Promoter: Cordillera Film Festival & Sierra Tap House
  - Location: West St. Plaza
- ***Beats & Bites – a weekly food truck party highlighting musicians and artists from our local Reno community***
  - 13 Weekly events June-August
  - Promoter: TBD
  - Location: Locomotion Plaza
- ***Vintage Flea Spree – a weekly outdoor vintage fair with food trucks, live music & vintage flea market***
  - 13 Weekly events June-August
  - Promoter: TBD
  - Location: Locomotion Plaza
- ***Off the Rails -- a monthly summer concert series presented by OffBeat Music Festival***
  - 3 Monthly events June-August
  - Promoter: OffBeat Music Festival
  - Location: Locomotion Plaza

The progress made in 2024 through downtown activations and special events has set the stage for even greater growth and community engagement in 2025. With new pilot programs and an unwavering commitment to revitalizing our public spaces, Downtown Reno will continue to flourish as a vibrant, inclusive hub for creativity, culture, and economic development.

## **2024 Event Season Plaza Activation Pilot Program Photos and Videos:**

### **Off the Rails**

- Off the Rails Promo Video:  
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1uSJs73lHogVJuYfNKNAzWlflFtpiHFrN/view?t=1>  
 (Future videos will be released as they become available)





**Flick on the Bricks:**



**Harmony on the River:**

