

**PLANNING COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT**

Date: March 5, 2025

To: Reno City Planning Commission

Subject: **Staff Report (For Possible Action): Case No. LDC25-00031 (J Resort Festival Grounds):** A request has been made for a conditional use permit to allow “Amusement or Recreation, Outside” and “Live Entertainment” land uses to facilitate outdoor festivals, concerts, recreation, and events. The ±4.5-acre site is located on seven parcels generally located south of Third Street, east of Ralston Street, and west of North Arlington Avenue. The site is located in the Mixed-Use Downtown Entertainment District (MD-ED) zone and has a Master Plan land use designation of Downtown Mixed-Use (DT-MU).

From: Leah Piccotti, Associate Planner

Ward #: 1

Case No.: LDC25-00031 (J Resort Festival Grounds)

Applicant: Reno Real Estate Development, LLC

APN: 011-360-27, 011-360-28, 011-026-11, 011-026-12, 011-026-13, 011-026-14, 011-026-15

Request: **Conditional Use Permit:** To allow “Amusement or Recreation, Outside” and “Live Entertainment” land uses to facilitate outdoor festivals, concerts, recreation, and events.

Location: See Case Maps (**Exhibit A**)

Proposed Motion: Based upon compliance with the applicable findings, I move to approve the Conditional Use Permit, subject to the conditions listed in the staff report.

Summary: A request has been made for a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) to allow the establishment of an outdoor festival/event space, with associated live entertainment, within the Mixed-Use Downtown Entertainment District (MD-ED) zone. The outdoor event space will have a maximum capacity of 15,000 patrons. Approval of this application will allow for: 1) the

establishment of an outdoor recreational venue; and 2) outdoor live entertainment until 11:00 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays.

Staff analysis focused on land use compatibility, noise, safety and security, potential impacts to City services, and supporting policies of the Master Plan. Key issues identified in this request are: 1) compatibility with surrounding uses and development; 2) traffic, access, and circulation; and 3) public safety. Staff can make all of the applicable findings and recommends approval of the conditional use permit, subject to the conditions o included in the staff report.

Background: The Neon Line Development Agreement was adopted by Council on October 27, 2021. This agreement outlines financial incentives and custom development standards (streetlights, signage, etc.) for development within the Neon Line plan area. The agreement does not supersede requirements for discretionary review within the plan area (e.g. conditional use permit, site plan review, etc.). Additional entitlements to allow live entertainment and outdoor recreation uses are required.

Discussion: J Resort owns and operates both the Glow Plaza venue and the proposed Festival Grounds. While there may be simultaneous use of both sites, the total number of attendees will not exceed 15,000 per day (**Condition No. 5**). In reviewing this application, Staff applied the analysis and conditions of approval for Glow Plaza. Some conditions of approval have been condensed or modified based on current code. Generally, the recommended conditions of approval in this request are the same as the approved conditions for Glow Plaza. Key differences between the two venues are outlined below.

Differences	Glow Plaza	J Resort Festival Grounds		
Zoning District	MD-NWQ	MD-ED		
Site Size	2.32 acres	4.5 acres		
Attendees	Capacity - 6,742	Maximum - 15,000 attendees		
Events	Unlimited Events 20 events per year (exceeding the decibel threshold)	Tier	Attendees	Number of Events
		Tier 1	0 to 5,000	Unlimited
		Tier 2	5,001 to 12,000	20 events per year
		Tier 3	12,001 to 15,000	10 events per year
Special Event/Activity Trigger	Over 3,700 attendees	Over 5,000 attendees		

*If less than ten (10) Tier 3 events are scheduled per year, the number of Tier 2 events can be increased by the number of unused Tier 3 events (for example, if there are only four (4) Tier 3 events, then there can be up to 26 Tier 2 events). Thus, there can be a total of thirty (30) Tier 2 and Tier 3 events, with no more than ten (10) Tier 3 events per year.

Special activity permits are required for activities outside of normal permitted business operations as a privilege, subject to the review and permitting of the Business License Department. Both special event and activity permitting are reviewed by various City departments to evaluate required public resources, associated staffing costs, and community impacts on a case by case basis.

Special activity and event permits indicate a 75-decibel maximum. Approval of this conditional use permit will require special activity/event permits for all events. Evaluation of impacts and municipal resources would be vetted depending on the scope of the proposed event (**Conditions No. 6**). The applicant has provided a Traffic Mitigation Plan (**Exhibit B**) for each tier of events. This plan will be applied to all events and will streamline the special activity/event permit review process. All applicable departments and agencies have reviewed the proposed mitigation plans and generally concur with the recommendations.

Analysis: Outdoor recreation is allowed in the MD-ED zoning district with the approval of a Minor Conditional Use Permit (MUP). This procedure is intended to ensure compatibility with surrounding areas and that adequate impact mitigation is provided. Outdoor live entertainment is allowed in the MD-ED zoning district between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. A CUP is required to exceed those hours. The applicant has requested to elevate the MUP to a CUP, allowing it to be considered concurrent with the live outdoor entertainment CUP (until 11:00 p.m.).

Site Design: The application proposes a ±4.5-acre festival area, including a ±64,800 square foot seating area, ±17,982 square foot entry plaza, ±52,936 square foot staging area, tent area, stage, and retail/concessions at multiple locations (**Exhibit C**). The only permanent improvements will be the fencing, perimeter lighting, landscaping, and signage (**Exhibit D**). The applicant has submitted building permits for grading/site work, as allowed under the MD-ED zone. While there is no minimum parking required for land uses within MD-ED, application materials identify ten open lots and shared parking areas that are owned/operated by the applicant and are anticipated for use associated with the project. Proposed landscaping includes ±1.43 acres (62,414 square feet) of sod, 43 trees, and 237 shrubs and perennials.

Fencing is proposed along the perimeter of the site. A photometric plan (**Exhibit E**) has been provided demonstrating that proposed site lighting is consistent with MD-ED standards. **Condition No. 7** restricts specialty lighting associated with onsite activity from shining onto offsite structures or public right-of-way(s). Portable restrooms are proposed on the southern portion of the site and are required to be screened from view from public right-of-way(s) (**Condition No. 8**). Screened onsite refuse containers shall be provided consistent with RMC standards (**Condition No. 9**).

Compatibility: Surrounding zoning is Mixed-Use Downtown - Northwest Quadrant (MD-NWQ) to the west, Mixed-Use Downtown - Powning District (MD-PD) to the south, and MD-ED to the east and north. The properties to the north and west are owned by the project applicant. Uses to

the south include multi-family residential and a religious assembly. Uses to the east include a hotel, retail space, and multi-family residential.

Sound and Hours of Operation: RMC does not regulate sound standards for activities unless adjacent to residentially zoned properties (not residential occupancy), emitted from a vehicle, or part of a special event/activity permit. Special event/activity permits require that amplified sound and permitted activities not exceed 75 decibels (as measured from the permitted boundaries), with amplified sound ending by 10:00 p.m.

Condition No. 10 limits general hours of operation from 6:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. Sunday through Thursday and 6:00 a.m. to 12:00 a.m. Friday and Saturday. Consistent with standard special activity/event permitting, **Condition No. 11** restricts amplified sound and the sale of alcohol from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. Sunday through Thursday and 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. Friday and Saturday.

A sound study was prepared by an acoustical consultant, analyzing impacts to surrounding properties during events with typical amplified concert sound emitted from the stage area (**Exhibit F**). Application materials indicate that events with over 5,000 attendees would be limited to 30 per year and would exceed special activity permit thresholds for permissible sound decibels. **Condition No. 12** would maintain requirements for special activity/event permitting and restrict the number of events/concerts that exceed this decibel threshold to a maximum of 30 per year.

Safety and Security: The project site will be staffed and monitored to ensure the safety of users and surrounding properties. **Conditions 13** requires a Security and Management Plan to be approved by the Zoning Administrator, Code Enforcement Department, Public Works Department, Reno Fire Department, and Reno Police Department prior to any site activity associated with this request. At a minimum the plan shall include:

- a. A management plan to address sweeping and pickup of any trash around the site perimeter at the close of onsite activities;
- b. Required signage including a website address providing a schedule of upcoming events;
- c. A patron queuing plan;
- d. A signage plan for prohibited items (i.e. weapons, drugs, alcohol, etc.);
- e. An evacuation plan in the event of an emergency;
- f. A security staffing, procedures, and training plan;
- g. A process for staff to review events of any size at the site; and
- h. A process for reimbursement for all City services required related to events (i.e. street closures, public safety, fire inspections, traffic mitigations, etc.).

The nearest Reno Fire Department station is Station 1 located at 494 E. 4th Street with an estimated response time of four minutes. All development will be required to follow the International Building and Fire Code as adopted at the time of building plan submittal. **Condition No. 14** advises

existing fire regulation permitting requirements, which may be applicable to lower occupancy activities not subject to special activity permitting.

Infrastructure: All infrastructure necessary to support the project is available as this is an infill development.

Traffic: A traffic study for the project was prepared by GCW Inc. (formerly Headway Transportation) dated January 24, 2025. The study produced a Traffic Management Recommendation Plan (**Exhibit B**). This includes recommendations for pedestrian safety based on the numbers of attendees for festival events. The recommended safety measures are based on the tiers of attendees, as referenced previously. City staff generally concurs with the recommendations outlined in the plan. Each event will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and modifications may be made to the plan depending on the event.

Parking: Approximately 1,965 parking spaces are available within ten private parking lots in the project vicinity. There are no minimum parking requirements for any land use in the Mixed-Use Downtown (MD) zoning districts. Additionally, the existing parking areas are independent, off-site, and not a part of this request. The Festival Grounds will provide a map of parking locations available to attendees on their website and with each ticket purchase. Based on the site area, RMC requires 50 onsite bicycle parking spaces. Per the Traffic Management Plan, temporary onsite bicycle parking will be provided for each event, equal to one percent of the tickets sold (**Condition No. 15**).

Pedestrian Access and Connectivity: Pedestrian access to the site will be through gated entries, with primary entry from Ralston Street. The Security and Management Plan will address crowd management, queuing, trespassing on adjacent private parcels, and trash management around site perimeters after events.

Master Plan Conformance: The subject site has a Master Plan land use designation of Downtown Mixed-Use (DT-MU) and is located adjacent to a Neighborhood Corridor and within a Mixed-Use area per the Structure Plan Framework of the Reno Master Plan. The site has a sub-land use designation of Mixed-Use Downtown – Entertainment District (MD-ED). The MD-ED area is the central core of the Downtown Regional Center. This district functions as a 24-hour gaming area and includes major hotel/casinos, the Reno Events Center, and National Bowling Stadium. As proposed, and with the recommended conditions, the project is substantially in conformance with the Master Plan land and the following applicable Master Plan goals and policies:

- Guiding Principle 1.2A: Arts and Outdoor Recreation Tourism
- Guiding Principle 1.4E: Arts and Culture
- Guiding Principle 3.1C: Tourism and Entertainment
- Guiding Principle 3.1G: Arts and Culture

- Guiding Principle 3.2C: Pedestrian Realm
- Guiding Principle 6.6A: Community Events and Activities
- Downtown Regional Center – Entertainment District 2: Mix of Uses

Public and Stakeholder Engagement: The project was reviewed by various City divisions and partner agencies. Courtesy notices and hearing notices were sent out to all property owners within a 750-foot noticing radius. The final noticing list totaled just over 700 property owners, NAB members, the owner, and the project applicant/agent. Staff received eight public comments, from five people, in opposition to the project (**Exhibit G**). Concerns include public safety, duplicate venues, parking, traffic, and noise. The request was heard by the Ward 1 Neighborhood Advisory Board (NAB) on February 10, 2025 (**Exhibit H**). Any future comments will be forwarded to the Planning Commission.

Recommended Conditions of Approval: All conditions shall be met to the satisfaction of Development Services Department staff, unless otherwise noted.

1. All work involved in constructing and operating a project approved pursuant to Title 18 of Reno Municipal Code shall comply with all plans, reports, renderings, and materials that were submitted or presented as a part of this application. City Codes shall prevail in the event of a conflict between the approved plans and the City Codes in effect when the permit is reviewed.
2. The owner or developer shall apply for a building permit for the entire project within 18 months of the date of approval of the Conditional Use Permit application and maintain the validity of that permit, or the Conditional Use Permit approval shall be null and void.
3. Prior to the issuance of any building permit and/or business license, the applicant shall attach a copy of the final approval letter. The approval letter shall accompany a narrative provided by the applicant that describes how the requested permit addresses each of the approved conditions of approval.
4. The applicant, developer, builder, property owner, or business proprietor, as applicable, shall continuously maintain a copy of this approval letter on the project site during the construction/operations of the project/business. This approval letter shall be posted or made readily available upon demand by City staff.
5. The Glow Plaza venue and the proposed Festival Grounds may hold events simultaneously. The total number of attendees shall not exceed 15,000 per day.
6. A special event or activity permit shall be required for all events. Additional requirements may be necessitated with special event or activity permit review. Onsite security shall

monitor and record onsite attendance for all activities to ensure that occupancy is not exceeded. Records shall be made available to City staff upon request.

7. Lighting shall be consistent with the photometric plan submitted in application materials. Specialty lighting (e.g. lasers, additional stage lighting, spotlights, etc.) associated with events shall not shine on any offsite structures or public right-of-way(s). Additional restrictions may be imposed through special activity and events permitting.
8. Portable restrooms shall be screened from view from public right-of-way(s).
9. Prior to site activity associated with this request, the applicant shall install code compliant refuse containers and appropriate screening.
10. Hours of operation shall be limited to 6:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. Sunday through Thursday and 6:00 a.m. to 12:00 a.m. Friday and Saturday.
11. Amplified sound and alcohol sales are restricted to 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. Sunday through Thursday and 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. Friday and Saturday.
12. Permitted special events and/or activities may exceed the 75-decibel threshold with amplified sound ceasing at 11:00 p.m. Tier 2 and Tier 3 events shall be limited to 30 per year, as outlined in the Traffic Management Plan (**Exhibit B**), subject to approval of special event and/or activity permit.
13. Prior to site activity associated with this request, a Security and Management Plan shall be submitted and approved by the Zoning Administrator, Code Enforcement Department, Public Works Department, Reno Fire Department, and Reno Police Department. At a minimum the plan shall include:
 - a. A management plan to address sweeping and pickup of any trash around site perimeter at the close of on-site activities;
 - b. Required signage including a website address providing a schedule of upcoming events;
 - c. A patron queuing plan;
 - d. A signage plan for prohibited items (i.e. weapons, drugs, alcohol, etc.);
 - e. An evacuation plan in the event of an emergency;
 - f. A security staffing, procedures and training plan;
 - g. A process for staff to review events of any size at the site; and
 - h. A process for reimbursement for all City services required related to the event (i.e. street closures, public safety, fire inspections, traffic mitigations, etc.).

Additional requirements and/or modifications may be required for special event and activity permits.

14. As required by RMC Section 105.6.36 of the adopted International Fire Code, as amended, a separate Outdoor Assembly Event operational permit will be issued by the Reno Fire Department. Each event will be reviewed by the Reno Fire Department for Fire Code compliance.
15. Prior to site activity associated with this request, the applicant shall provide plans demonstrating installation of bicycle parking compliant with RMC 18.04.705 (c) “Bicycle Parking” and as outlined the Traffic Management Plan (**Exhibit B**).

Findings:

General Approval Criteria: The decision-making body shall review all development applications for compliance with the applicable general review criteria stated below.

- 1) Consistency with the Reno Master Plan: The proposed development shall be consistent with the Reno Master Plan. The decision-making authority:
 - a. Shall weigh competing plan goals, policies, and strategies; and
 - b. May approve an application that provides a public benefit even if the development is contrary to some of the goals, policies, or strategies in the Reno Master Plan.
- 2) Compliance with Title 18: The proposed development shall comply with all applicable standards in this Title, unless the standard is lawfully modified or varied. Compliance with these standards is applied at the level of detail required for the subject submittal.
- 3) Mitigates Traffic Impacts: The project mitigates traffic impacts based on applicable standards of the City of Reno and the Regional Transportation Commission.
- 4) Provides Safe Environment: The project provides a safe environment for pedestrians and people on bicycles.
- 5) Rational Phasing Plan: If the application involves phases, each phase of the proposed development contains all of the required streets, utilities, landscaping, open space, and other improvements that are required to serve or otherwise accompany the completed phases of the project, and shall not depend on subsequent phases for those improvements.

Conditional Use Permit: In addition to meeting the criteria in Section 18.08.304(e), *Approval Criteria Applicable to all Applications*, the following findings shall be made prior to granting a conditional use permit:

- (1) The proposed location of the use is in accordance with the objectives of this Title and the purpose of the zoning district in which the site is located;

- (2) The proposed land use and project design is compatible with surrounding development;
- (3) The proposed land use and project design is consistent with applicable development standards;
- (4) Public services and facilities are available to serve the project, or will be provided with development;
- (5) The characteristics of the use as proposed and as may be conditioned are reasonably compatible with the types of use permitted in the surrounding area; and
- (6) The granting of the conditional use permit will not be materially detrimental to the public health, safety, or welfare. The factors to be considered in evaluating this application shall include:
 - a. Property damage or nuisance resulting from noise, smoke, odor, dust, vibration, or illumination; and
 - b. Any hazard to persons and property.

Attachments:

Exhibit A – Case Maps

Exhibit B – Traffic Management Plan

Exhibit C – Plans & Renderings

Exhibit D – Sign Plan

Exhibit E – Photometric Plan

Exhibit F – Sound Study

Exhibit G – Public Comments