

## Report to Community and Protective Services Committee

**To:** Chair and Members,  
Community and Protective Services Committee

**From:** Cheryl Smith, Deputy City Manager, Neighbourhood and Community-Wide Services

**Subject:** Special Events Policy Review Public Participation Meeting Report

**Date:** November 11, 2024

## Recommendation

That, on the recommendation of the Deputy City Manager, Neighbourhood and Community-Wide Services the report dated November 11, 2024, and titled “Special Events Policy Review Public Participation Meeting Report” **BE RECEIVED** as information; it being noted that Civic Administration will bring forward an amended Special Events Policy at the December 2, 2024, Community and Protective Services Committee meeting.

## Executive Summary

The Special Event Policy is being reviewed with the goals of finding options to reduce barriers for community partners to host special events in publicly owned spaces around the city and ensuring that the policy is up to date and continues to support special event operators to effectively plan and execute successful special events in London.

As part of the review process, Civic Administration engaged the community to gather feedback on the amended Special Events Policy. This report provides a summary of the community feedback for consideration during the Public Participation Meeting being held on November 11, 2024.

## Previous Reports Pertinent to this Matter

- [Special Events Policy Update \(CPSC – September 9, 2024\)](#)
- [2024 Rock the Park One-Time Policy Exemption Request \(CPSC - March 18, 2024\)](#)
- [2022 Rock the Park One-Time Policy Exemption Request \(CPSC - March 29, 2022\)](#)
- [Special Events Policies and Procedures Manual – Deferred Matters File No. 2 \(CPSC - July 27, 2021\)](#)
- [Extension of Hours for Sound from Outdoor Stage During 2019 Juno Week \(CPSC - January 22, 2019\)](#)
- [2017 Rock the Park One-Time Exemption Request \(SPPC - March 20, 2017\)](#)
- [Music, Entertainment and Culture District Feasibility Study and Strategy \(SPPC - March 20, 2017\)](#)

## Linkage to the Corporate Strategic Plan

The Special Events Policies and Procedures Manual is aligned with the Strategic Area of Focus Wellbeing and Safety, as presented in the City of London Strategic Plan 2023-2027.

- Outcome: London has safe, vibrant, and healthy neighbourhoods and communities.
- Expected Result: Londoners have safe access to public spaces, services, and supports that increase wellbeing and quality of life.
- Strategy: Reduce barriers for community partners to host special events in publicly owned spaces across the city.

## Analysis

### 1.0 Background Information

#### 1.1 Council Direction on Special Events

At its meeting on September 9, 2024, Municipal Council resolved:

That the following actions be taken with respect to the staff report, dated September 9, 2024, related to the Special Events Policy:

- a) the above-noted staff report BE RECEIVED;
- b) the Civic Administration BE DIRECTED to hold a public participation meeting at the November 11, 2024, Community and Protective Services Committee to receive input on the draft Special Events Policy;
- c) the Civic Administration BE DIRECTED to report back with a summary of community feedback and an amended Special Events Policy at a future Community and Protective Services Committee meeting; and,
- d) the Civic Administration BE DIRECTED to hold a hybrid community meeting with residents and neighbourhood associations near Victoria Park, Harris Park, and Dundas Place to address the impact of changes to the Special Events Policy on their neighbourhoods.

## 1.2 Context

Each year London is host to over 160 special events organized by third-party event operators. Special events are critical to supporting a culturally, socially, and economically vibrant city. They raise the city's profile, support arts and culture, and are significant drivers of tourism, economic development, and community development.

The aim of the Special Events Policy is to ensure: the safety of London residents, event participants, and public assets; that all federal and provincial laws and regulations and municipal by-laws are observed; that Special Event applications are treated fairly and in an equitable manner; and alignment to the City of London Strategic Plan.

The Special Events Policy sets high-level direction for event operators, while the Special Events Administrative Procedures Manual includes robust details on how to operationalize the direction that has been set by Council.

This report is a continuation of the September 9, 2024, [Special Events Policy Update](#), where Civic Administration:

- presented barriers identified through community engagement that event operators face when implementing special events on publicly owned land;
- presented the proposed Special Events Policy revisions to address barriers; and,
- recommended next steps to engage the public on proposed revisions to the Special Events Policy.

In alignment with Council's direction, the purpose of this report is to present the results from the Get Involved London [survey](#) and hybrid community meeting for consideration during the Public Participation Meeting being held on November 11, 2024.

The report with the results from the survey and hybrid community meeting is attached as [Appendix A](#).

## 2.0 Discussion and Considerations

### 2.1 Overview of the Policy Revisions for Consideration

The key proposed policy updates for consideration included:

- Climate action and greening
- Free water
- Sound management
- Event lengths and limits
- Safety and security
- Accessibility and equity
- Liability and compliance
- Support for event operators

These policy revisions were explored with the community through a survey and hybrid community consultation.

## 2.2 Summary of the Special Events Policy Review Consultation

Londoners were invited to participate in a survey through the City of London's Get Involved [site](#) between September 25, 2024 and October 24, 2024. Londoners were also invited to participate in a hybrid community meeting on October 24, 2024.

Engagement opportunities were promoted through social media, community centre screens, digital billboards, Dundas Place screens, and posters at various City of London locations. In addition, a direct email invitation and reminder was distributed to downtown neighbourhood/community associations including North Talbot Community Association, Blackfriars Community Association, Piccadilly Area Neighbourhood Association, London Downtown Neighbours Network, Downtown London Community Association and Woodfield resident group.

### Survey and Hybrid Community Meeting Participation

- There were 180 surveys completed on the City of London's Get Involved site available between September 25, 2024 and October 24, 2024.
- There were 20 community members who participated in the hybrid community meeting with downtown residents and neighbourhood associations on October 24, 2024, held from 6:00 pm – 7:30 pm at Goodwill Industries (255 Horton St.).

### Survey Results

- 55% of respondents indicated they attend special events in London occasionally, 31% attend special events in London frequently, 12% rarely and 2% never.
- 80% of respondents expressed that they do not currently or plan to operate special events in London, while 16% currently operate special events, and 4% plan to operate special events in the future.
- 92% of respondents shared that special events were very important or important to the social, cultural, and economic vibrancy of a city, 5% had no opinion, and 3% expressed that special events were not important or not very important.
- 65% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with extending event hours in Victoria Park, Harris Park, and Dundas Place until midnight on Fridays and Saturdays, 18% were neutral, and 17% disagreed or strongly disagreed.
- 75% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed the measures in the Special Events Policy to promote greener events, such as encouraging public and active transportation, providing bike valet services for large events, and providing an updated waste management plan aligned with their priorities, while 21% were neutral, and 4% disagreed.
- 84% of respondents reported that providing free water at gated events was very important or important, 9% had no opinion, and 7% noted that it was not important or not very important.
- 80% of respondents indicated it was very important or important to be able to bring empty water bottles into gated events, 11% had no opinion, and 9% expressed it was not important or not important at all.
- 55% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the maximum sound level of 90 dB(A) for amplified sound at events and the \$2,000 penalty for noise violations, 26% were neutral, and 19% disagreed or strongly disagreed.
- 74% of respondents acknowledged that it was very important or important that event operators receive templates to help with planning for accessibility, waste management, sound design, and emergency management and safety as part of the Administrative Procedures Manual, 22% had no opinion, and 4% suggested that templates were not important or not very important.
- 78% of respondents stated that they strongly agreed or agreed the proposed policy amendments align with their priorities and concerns, 15% had no opinion, and 7% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

### Survey and Hybrid Community Meeting Key Themes

- **Event lengths and limits:** Respondents were generally in agreement with having events in downtown core locations (Victoria Park, Harris Park, Dundas Place, and Covent Garden Market) harmonized to end at midnight, however, concerns were raised about high noise levels accompanying the extended hours.

- **Climate action and greening:** Respondents noted public transportation and bike valets were important and recommended bus route extensions and extended operating times, shuttle buses, and third-party transportation. Respondents were also concerned about the state of parks after events and recommended penalties or damage deposits as options to ensure accountability and responsibility by event operators.
- **Free water:** Free water and the ability to bring reusable water bottles into events were welcomed and appreciated by respondents.
- **Sound management:** Maintaining the sound level of 90 dB(A) at events was received positively by most respondents, however, some respondents indicated that sound level was too low and others indicating it was too high.
- **Capacity Building:** Respondents agreed that templates to help with planning and implementation would be beneficial and reduce barriers for event operators.

Please see [Appendix A](#) for the Special Events Policy: Community Consultation Report for the complete set of results.

## 2.3 Next Steps

Based on Council's direction and community engagement results, Civic Administration will amend the Special Events Policy for consideration at the December 2, 2024, Community and Protective Services Committee meeting. It is intended that the amended Special Events Policy will be in place in the first quarter of 2025.

While this work is underway, Civic Administration continues to respond to and support the community in planning for and implementing special events in London.

## Conclusion

Special events are critical to the cultural, economic and social fabric of London. Civic Administration wishes to thank the individuals and groups who shared their insights that formed the foundation of this report.

To reduce barriers for community partners to host special events in publicly owned spaces across the city, Civic Administration will amend the Special Event Policy in consideration of the feedback provided and provide options for Council's consideration.

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<b>Recommended by:</b>	<b>Cheryl Smith, Deputy City Manager, Neighbourhood and Community-Wide Services</b>



# Special Events Policy:

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## Community Consultation Report

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October 2024

Prepared by



London  
CANADA

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## Section 1.0:

# Introduction

## About the Special Events Policy Review

Each year, London hosts over 160 special events organized by third-party event operators. Special events are important to supporting a culturally, socially and economically vibrant city. They raise the city's profile, support arts and culture, and are significant drivers of tourism, economic development, and community development. In addition, London became Canada's first UNESCO City of Music in 2021, joining a global network of municipalities committed to the development of its music industry.

The Special Events Policy outlines the expectations and responsibilities for third-party event operators planning and running events in publicly owned outdoor spaces. Examples of special events include multi-day music festivals, one-day cultural celebrations, fundraising walks and runs, and large neighbourhood gatherings.

The goal of the Special Events Policy is to ensure safety, legal compliance, fairness, and alignment with the City's Strategic Plan.

## About the Community Consultation

As part of reviewing the Special Events Policy, feedback was sought from residents on the proposed policy amendments through an online survey and hybrid community meeting.

In total, 180 surveys were completed on the City of London's Get Involved site from September 25, 2024, to October 24, 2024. Further, 20 Londoners participated in the hybrid community meeting with downtown residents and neighbourhood associations held on October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2024, from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at Goodwill Industries.

## Purpose of this Report

The survey and hybrid community meeting responses were collated into a single document for analysis. Descriptive statistics were prepared for quantitative (closed-ended) questions in the survey. A thematic analysis was conducted to identify common themes across all responses to the qualitative (open-ended) question.

The purpose of this report is to present the results from the survey and hybrid community meeting. Section 2.0 Consultation Results, contains descriptive statistics and themes corresponding to the specific policy amendments.



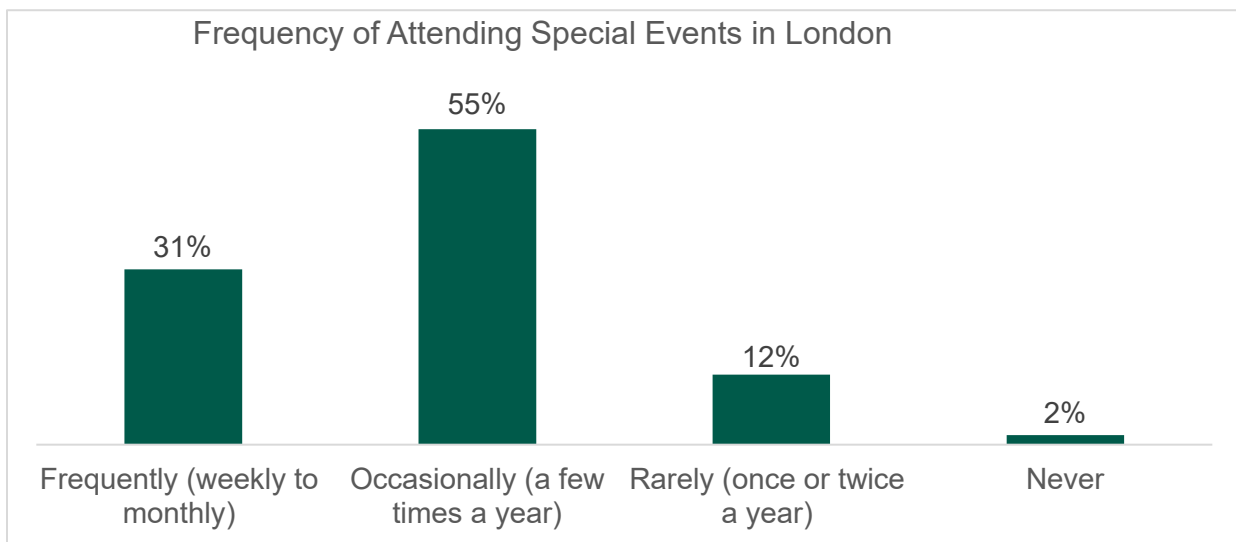
## Section 2.0:

# Consultation Results

The following results were derived from the survey on the Get Involved London site and the hybrid community meeting. The themes focus on the specific Special Events Policy amendments. A series of summary statements have been included for each theme to provide further detail. The term n= is used to identify the number of respondents.

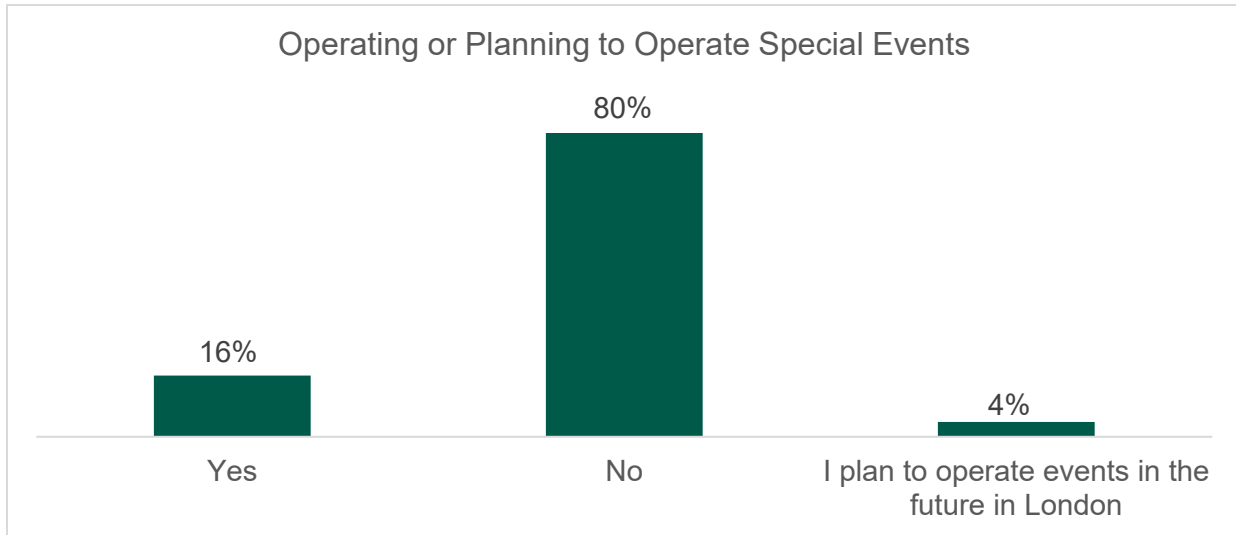
## 2.1 Engagement in Special Events

### Frequency of Attending Special Events in London



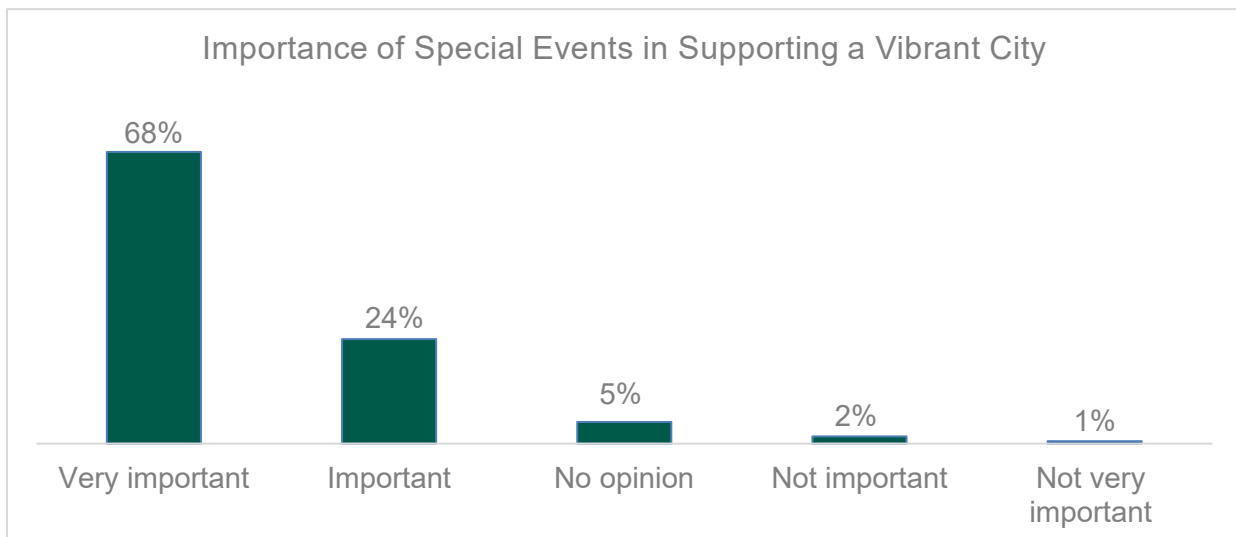
In total, 55% (n=100) of respondents indicated that they attend special events in London occasionally. In comparison, 31% (n=55) of respondents attend special events in London frequently, followed by 12% (n=22) rarely, and 2% (n=3) never.

## Operating or Planning to Operate Special Events



In total, 80% (n=144) of respondents expressed that they do not currently or plan to operate special events in London, 16% (n=29) currently operate special events, and 4% (n=7) plan to operate special events in the future.

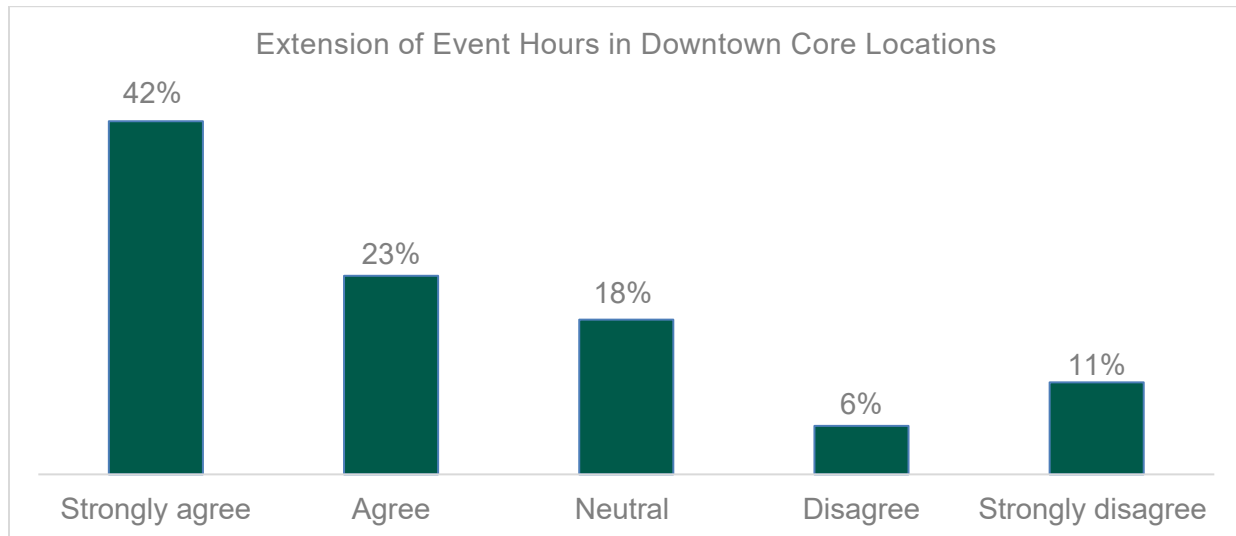
## Importance of Special Events in Supporting a Vibrant City



When asked how important special events are to a city's social, cultural, and economic vibrancy, 92% (n=163) of respondents said they were very important or important, 5% (n=10) had no opinion, and 3% (n=4) expressed that they were not important or not very important.

## 2.2 Event Lengths and Limits

### Extension of Event Hours in Victoria Park, Harris Park, and Dundas Place



The Special Events Policy proposes extending event hours in Victoria Park, Harris Park and Dundas Place to midnight on Fridays and Saturdays. Respondents were asked whether they agreed with extending hours.

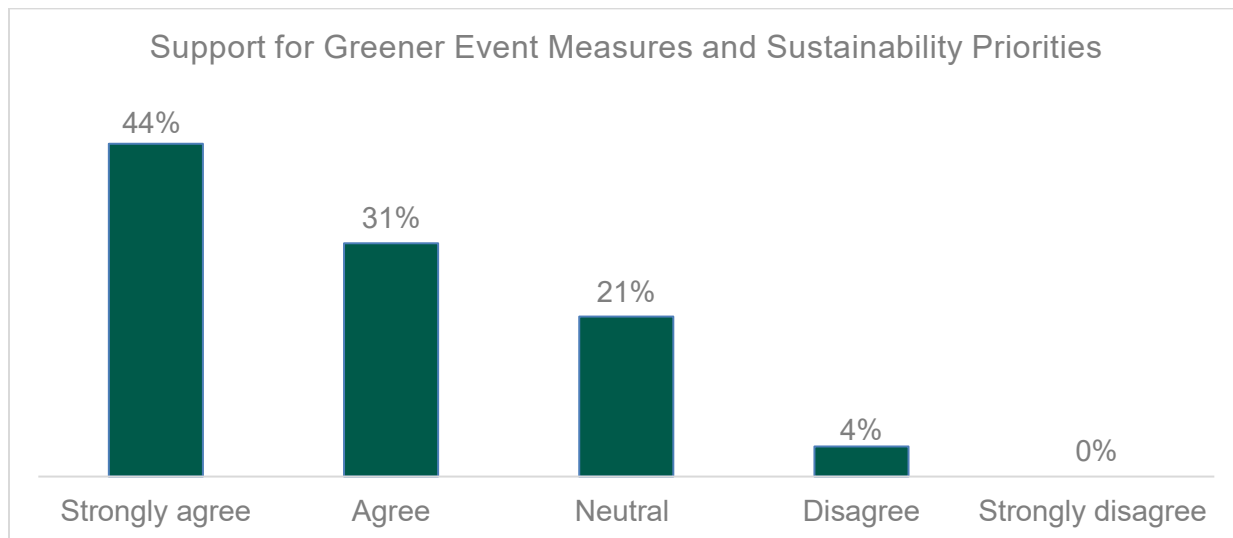
A total of 65% (n=117) of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with extending event hours. In comparison, 18% (n=33) of respondents were neutral about extending event hours, and 17% (n=30) of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with extending event hours.

The following themes were also derived from the responses:

- 3 respondents commented that event hours should not be extended due to the impact that the noise levels of the events and people leaving the events have on other residents
- 5 respondents stated that event hours should be extended to midnight to promote a vibrant nightlife and successful events

## 2.3 Climate Action and Greening

### Support for Greener Event Measures and Sustainability Priorities

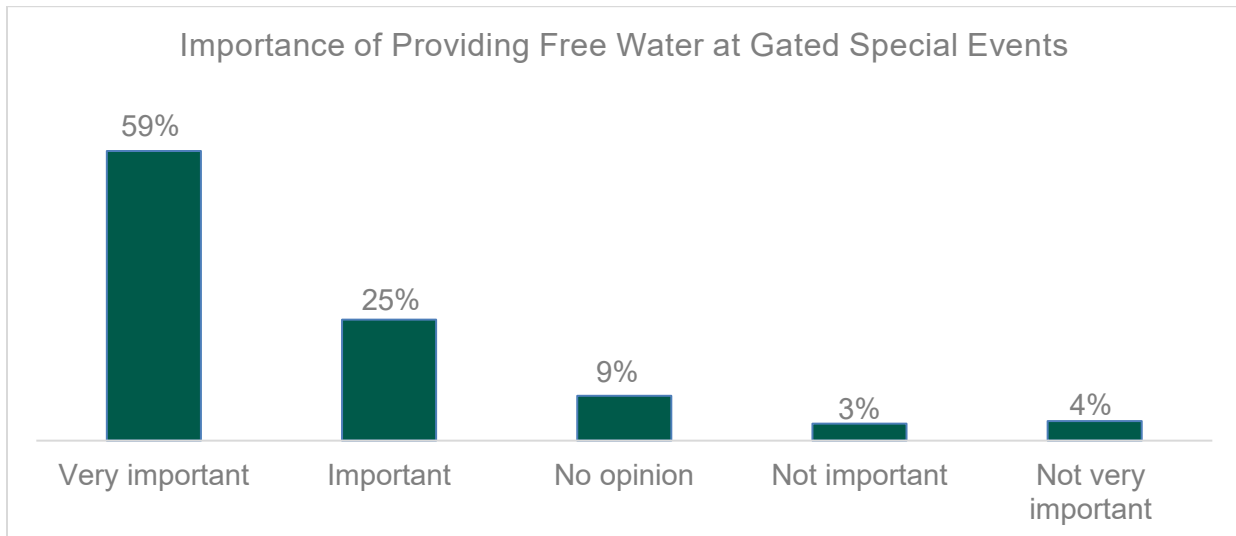


The Special Events policy includes measures to promote greener events, such as encouraging public and active transportation, providing a bike valet service for larger events, and providing an updated waste management plan. Respondents were asked whether these changes align with their priorities for climate action and sustainability. The majority of respondents (75%, n=136) strongly agreed or agreed the policy changes aligned with their priorities, while 21% (n=37) of respondents were neutral, and 4% (n=7) disagreed that the policy changes aligned with their priorities. The following remarks were also noted in responses:

- 15 respondents recommended that waste management efforts at events need to be improved and should incorporate increased litter pick up, waste reduction, sufficient receptacles, banning single-use plastics, mandatory composting, etc.
- 9 respondents stated a bike valet service is important to support active transportation and address active transportation fears (e.g., bikes being stolen)
- 8 respondents commented that public transit routes and hours should be extended and shuttle buses offered to support the use of public transit to events
- 8 respondents expressed that large events do significant damage to London's parks and green measures are not sufficient; event operators should be required to address any damage caused or pay for the damage to be addressed so that all Londoners can continue to use the parks after events
- 5 respondents stated that public and active transportation infrastructure needs to be improved to encourage the uptake of alternative transportation options
- 3 respondents suggested investigating the use of laser or drone shows to limit or eliminate fireworks to decrease noise and environmental pollution

## 2.4 Free Water

### Importance of Providing Free Water at Gated Special Events

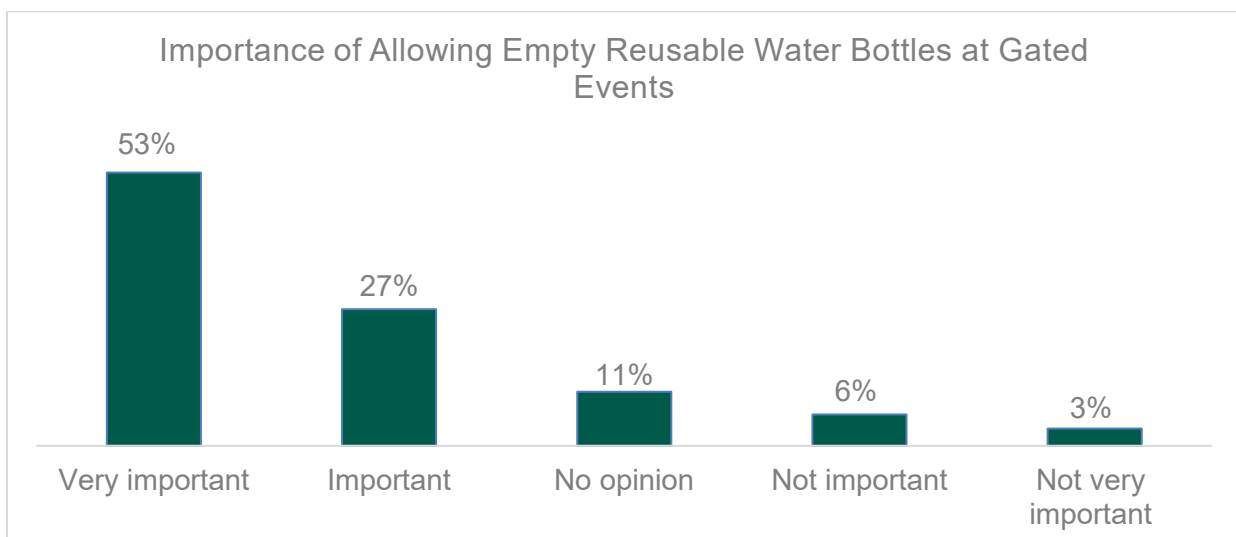


Respondents were asked about the importance of providing free water at gated special events. In total, 84% (n=150) of respondents reported that it was very important or important, 9% (n=17) of respondents had no opinion, and 7% (n=13) of respondents noted that it was not important or not very important.

In alignment with free water:

- 4 respondents shared that free water is a great idea and long overdue
- 4 respondents stated that free water will add significant benefits to events and reduce health and safety concerns

### Importance of Allowing Empty Reusable Water Bottles at Gated Events



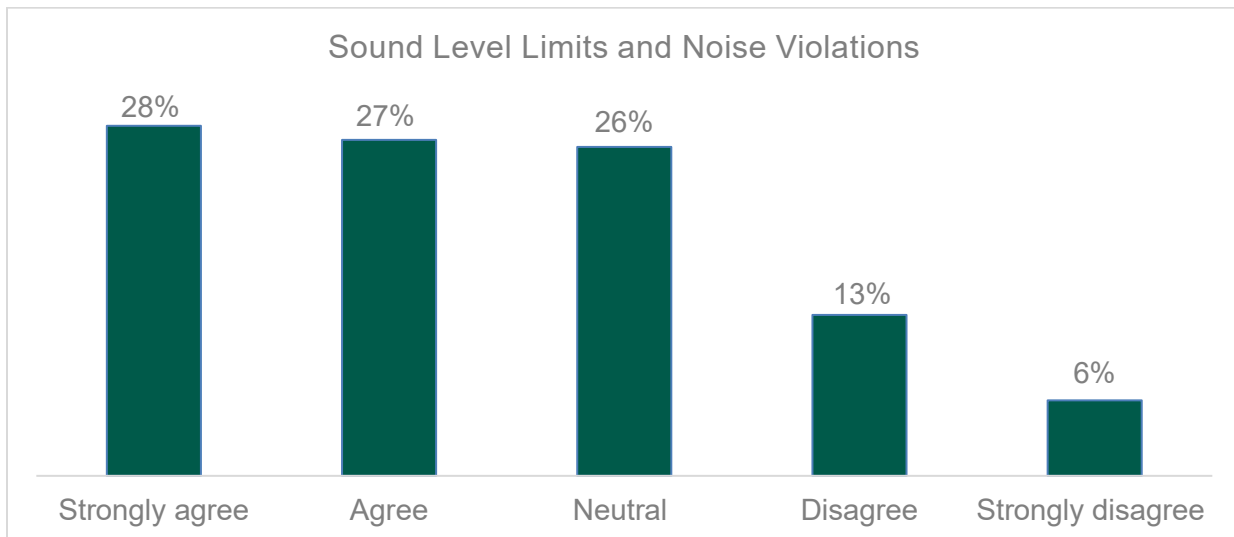
When asked about the importance of bringing empty reusable water bottles into gated events, 80% (n=144) of respondents indicated it was very important or important, 11% (n=19) had no opinion, and 9% (n=17) expressed it was not important or not important at all.

Related to reusable water bottles:

- 4 respondents noted that the ability to bring reusable water bottles into events encourages attendance at events and provides alternative beverage options
- 2 respondents shared that opportunities to refill water bottles from a clean source should be considered rather than having to purchase bottled water

## 2.5 Sound Management

### Sound Level Limits and Noise Violations



The proposed Special Events Policy maintains the maximum sound level of 90 dB(A) for amplified sound events and introduces a \$2,000 penalty for noise violations. When asked about their thoughts about these changes, 55% (n=98) of respondents strongly agreed or agreed, 26% (n=47) were neutral, and 19% (n=35) disagreed or strongly disagreed.

When sharing their thoughts about sound level limits:

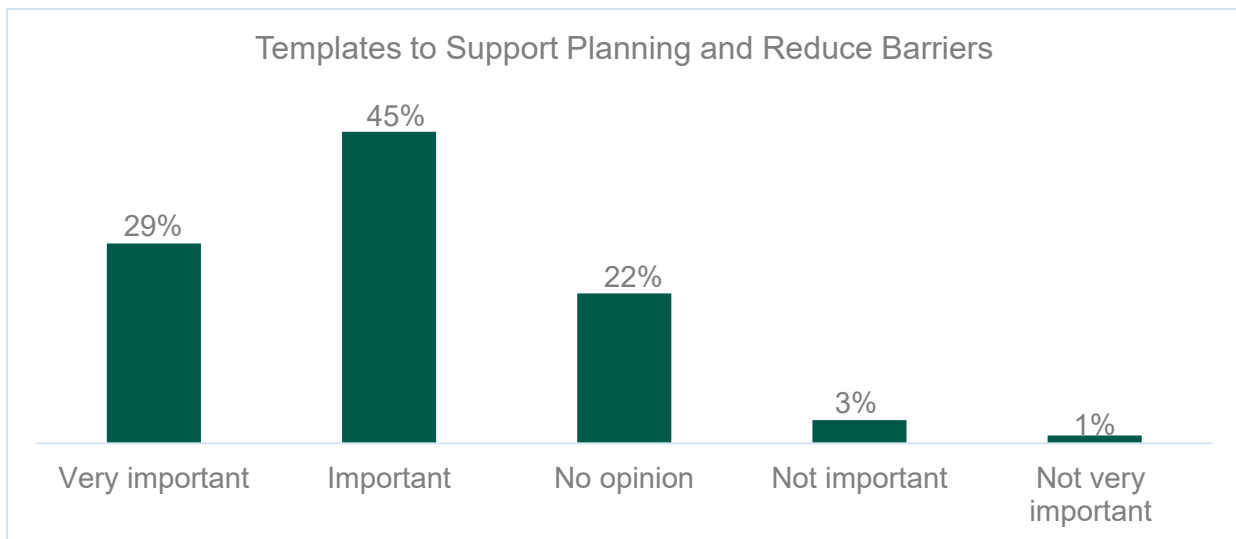
- 5 respondents expressed the proposed sound levels are too high and should be lowered in consideration of those who live in and near downtown due to sound travel
- 3 respondents explained the proposed sound levels are too low, are impossible to implement in an event with a live band, and should be increased
- 2 respondents commented that given the economic and community benefits, noise from events should be accommodated

In reference to noise violations:

- 3 respondents commented that the security deposit of \$2,000 in relation to noise violations is too high and is a barrier for some event organizers
- 3 respondents indicated that a \$2,000 penalty for noise violations is too low, and most large events will be able to easily cover this cost as part of their event planning budget, and consideration should be given to a higher fee or setting it proportional to revenues

## 2.6 Capacity Building

### Templates to Support Planning and Reduce Barriers

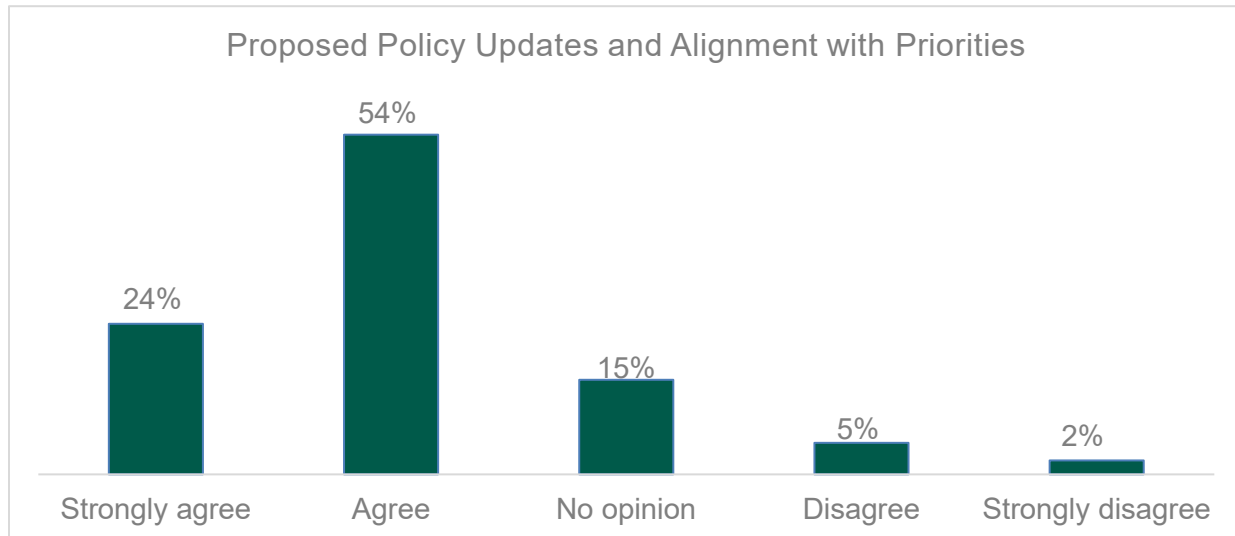


The proposed Special Event Policy recommends that event operators receive templates to help with planning for accessibility, waste management, sound design, and emergency management as part of the Administrative Procedures Manual.

In total, 74% (n=132) of respondents acknowledged that templates to support planning and reduce barriers were very important or important. In comparison, 22% (n=39) of respondents had no opinion, and 4% (n=8) of respondents suggested that templates were not important or not very important.

## 2.7 Proposed Policy Updates

### Proposed Policy Updates and Alignment with Priorities



Respondents were asked whether the proposed special event policy updates align with their priorities and concerns. The majority of respondents (78%, n=140) stated that they strongly agreed or agreed that the proposed updates align with their priorities and concerns, 15% (n=27) of respondents had no opinion, and 7% (n=13) of respondents noted that they disagreed or strongly disagreed that the proposed policy updates align with their priorities or concerns.

Respondents also noted the following considerations in their responses:

- 7 respondents recommended safety and security should be considered as part of event planning
- 3 respondents suggested moving events out of parks to indoor event spaces or large open outdoor spaces beyond the downtown core
- 2 respondents requested an increase in the number of festivals in London, including more summer festivals, holiday festivals, fall and winter markets, and fall and winter festivals



## Section 3.0:

# Conclusion

Special events are important to a socially, culturally, and economically vibrant city. Overall, respondents were in agreement with the proposed Special Event Policy amendments.

The majority of respondents supported the following special event policy amendments:

- Extending event hours in Victoria Park, Harris Park, and Dundas Place to midnight on Fridays and Saturdays;
- Implementing measures to promote greener events such as encouraging public and active transportation, providing bike valet services for larger events, and providing an updated waste management plan;
- Providing free water at gated events and allowing attendees to bring empty reusable water bottles into events;
- Maintaining a maximum sound level of 90 dB(A) for amplified sound events and introducing a \$2,000 penalty for noise violations; and,
- Providing event operators with templates to support planning and reduce barriers to implementing events.

Respondents raised concerns about special events, such as challenges with waste management, park maintenance, sufficient transportation infrastructure, and safety and security planning. Recommendations related to waste management, event location and frequency, transportation infrastructure, and policy enforcement were also provided.

Overall, respondents shared they appreciated the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed special event policy amendments and that the special event policy amendments reflect that the City is moving in the right direction with special events in London.