

STAFF REPORT

DATE: March 3, 2026
TO: City Council
FROM: Todd Henry, Police Chief
SUBJECT: Safety Enhancement Zones and Temporary Suspension of Exceptions for Alcohol Consumption in Parks for Picnic Day 2026

Recommendation

1. Approve the attached Resolution (Attachment 1) Establishing Safety Enhancement Zones associated with Picnic Day 2026, which would increase penalties for certain Municipal Code violations committed during a defined period of time within the Safety Enhancement Zones.
2. Approve the attached Resolution (Attachment 2), Establishing a Temporary Alcohol Restriction associated with Picnic Day 2026 for all public parks, which would temporarily suspend the park exception to the prohibition on alcohol consumption and possession of open containers in public spaces during Picnic Day.

Fiscal Impact

Although the City receives more revenue per citation issued in a Safety Enhancement Zone, the increase is negligible relative to the overall budget and is not a factor in establishing the Zones. Funding is included in existing budgets. Labor to create, install, and then remove the signs will be diverted from other maintenance activities.

Council Goal

Although a Safety Enhancement Zone and temporary alcohol restrictions in parks are related to Maintaining High Quality Infrastructure and Services, they are part of regular business and are not specific tasks outlined in the goals.

Commission Involvement

None

Background and Analysis

Safety Enhancement Zones

In 2011, the Council added Chapter 41 to the City of Davis Municipal Code, authorizing the City Council to designate Safety Enhancement Zones to enhance penalties for violations of certain Municipal Code provisions committed within a designated zone, during a prescribed period of time. Each time the Council wishes to use that portion of the Code, it must adopt a resolution outlining the dates and locations in which the Zone or Zones will be enacted. Council must therefore adopt the attached resolution in order to establish the Safety Enhancement Zones (SEZ) for Picnic Day 2026.

The City Council has been briefed previously on many of the problems associated with Picnic Day, including large parties and dangerous behavior. The sole purpose of the entire weekend, for many of those who do not engage in the formal campus events, is to get intoxicated, without concern regarding behavior. That behavior, coupled with the sheer number of visitors to the community, has made the event (or series of events) difficult to manage.

The SEZ was created in 2010 as the result of discussions with community groups, UC Davis campus staff, the Police Department, and the business community, with the goal of reducing problems associated with intoxication. The SEZ began in the downtown and was expanded to adjacent neighborhoods in subsequent years. In 2023, there was a slight change to the SEZ due to numerous complaints from hundreds of people who had gathered in Slide Hill Park in previous years. The parties occurring in Slide Hill Park are typically large, involve the consumption of large quantities of alcohol, and include loud music. Rather than expand the entire SEZ to encompass all the neighborhoods surrounding Slide Hill Park, staff still recommends making Slide Hill Park its own SEZ for Picnic Day.

A third SEZ was added in 2025 to include Walnut Park. This is due to numerous community complaints in 2023 and 2024 regarding unpermitted amplified music and hundreds of people consuming alcohol inside the park. Large numbers of police resources were required to move the gatherings out of the park. Substantial amounts of trash were discarded in the park, requiring City staff to respond and clean up. The SEZ will encompass Walnut Park and the adjacent parking lot.

The goals for establishing a SEZ, which increases fines for certain offenses occurring in the zone, are to deter unlawful behavior, particularly within a SEZ (those areas determined to be where the majority of public offenses and nuisance behaviors occur), and to punish more severely those who choose to violate the laws in a SEZ. Enactment of the ordinance does not add or modify existing laws or ordinances. The ordinance simply authorizes increased fines within a SEZ during the specified time period. Signs will be posted at major access points to a Zone, as well as locations within a SEZ, warning of the enhanced fines for specified offenses.

In establishing a SEZ, it is important to identify a specific target area or areas where prior notice (street signs), public education, and later enforcement can effectively occur. A SEZ should be designated because of a prior history of problems, which makes the SEZ designation defensible if challenged. These proposed areas have been identified as having the most frequently violated/reported Municipal Code provisions contributing to Picnic Day disorder and violence, such as: possessing open containers of alcohol, general noise violations, urinating in public, and smoking within twenty feet of a business (normally, bars and/or restaurants). The SEZ areas have seen significant calls for service, including several very large alcohol/drug-related parties with over 1,000 young adults in attendance, during the thirty-six-hour operational period for Picnic Day (6:00pm Friday through 6:00am Sunday).

As in years past, the Safety Enhancement Zone ordinance would be widely publicized before the annual Picnic Day weekend. City staff will work with on-campus groups to publicize the zones. Student groups and associations will help educate the UC Davis student body about the consequences of Municipal Code violations.

Temporary Suspension of Exceptions for Alcohol Consumption in Parks

In addition to the proposed establishment of Safety Enhancement Zones, staff recommends that the City Council adopt a separate resolution temporarily suspending the park exception to the City's prohibition on alcohol consumption and possession of open containers in public spaces during the Picnic Day period.

The Council has completed a first reading of an amendment to Section 26.04.020 of the Davis Municipal Code, which clarifies and strengthens the City's authority to regulate the time, place, and manner of alcohol consumption in public spaces in order to protect public health, safety, and welfare. The amendment is anticipated to be fully adopted and codified prior to Picnic Day.

Section 26.04.020 generally prohibits the consumption and possession of open containers of alcoholic beverages in public spaces, while providing limited exceptions, including an exception that permits alcohol consumption in designated public parks under normal circumstances. The Municipal Code authorizes the Council to suspend that exception for specific dates, times, and geographic areas when necessary to address public safety concerns.

Each time the Council determines that the park exception should be temporarily suspended for a specific event, it must adopt a resolution identifying the applicable timeframe and geographic scope of the prohibition. Accordingly, Council must adopt the attached resolution (Attachment 2) to temporarily suspend the park exception during the Picnic Day operational period.

If approved, the resolution would prohibit the consumption of alcoholic beverages and the possession of open containers in all public parks, greenbelts, bike paths, and public spaces commonly held open to the public for the same timeframe as the Safety Enhancement Zones, thereby ensuring consistency in enforcement and supporting coordinated public safety operations.

Staff is requesting Council consideration of this resolution due to the City's documented history of alcohol-related public safety and quality-of-life impacts during Picnic Day, particularly in public parks. In prior years, alcohol consumption in parks has contributed to disorderly conduct, medical emergencies, vandalism, and significant demands on police, fire, emergency medical, and public works resources.

Adoption of a temporary alcohol prohibition would complement the Safety Enhancement Zone framework by establishing clear, uniform expectations regarding alcohol use in public spaces during the Picnic Day period, improving enforceability, and reducing ambiguity for residents, visitors, and enforcement personnel. Together, the proposed

Safety Enhancement Zones and the temporary alcohol ban are intended to deter unlawful behavior, reduce alcohol-related harm, and support a safer environment for both the community and visitors.

The proposed resolution would be limited in duration and scope, would not amend or permanently modify the Davis Municipal Code, and would not apply to permitted special events where the City has expressly authorized alcohol consumption within an approved permit area. If adopted, City staff would provide advance public notice through signage and public communications.

Attachments

1. City Council Resolution Designating a Safety Enhancement Zone for Picnic Day 2026
2. City Council Resolution Temporarily Suspending Exceptions for Alcohol Consumption in Parks

RESOLUTION NO. 26-XXX, SERIES 2026

**RESOLUTION DESIGNATING SAFETY ENHANCEMENT ZONES FOR
PICNIC DAY 2026 AND DESIGNATING THE TIME DURING WHICH CERTAIN
MUNICIPAL CODE VIOLATIONS COMMITTED WITHIN THE DESIGNATED SAFETY
ENHANCEMENT ZONE WILL RESULT IN INCREASED FINES**

WHEREAS, pursuant to state law, the City Council may impose fines, penalties, and forfeitures for violations of local ordinances; and

WHEREAS, on February 15, 2011, the City Council adopted a Safety Enhancement Zones Ordinance, Ordinance No. 2375, which authorizes the City Council, upon making certain findings, to designate a safety enhancement zone to enhance the penalties for violations of certain provisions of the Davis Municipal Code committed within the designated zone during the time in which that zone designation applies; and

WHEREAS, Picnic Day attracts a large number of visitors to the City; and

WHEREAS, the City has in the past experienced public safety problems on Picnic Day, including problems associated with excessive consumption of alcohol; and

WHEREAS, the City anticipates the typical large crowds for Picnic Day 2026; and

WHEREAS, the City desires to take measures to protect the safety and welfare of the community on Picnic Day and of those who visit the City to enjoy Picnic Day festivities.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Davis does hereby resolve that public safety problems historically associated with annual Picnic Day celebrations have created a need to take action to protect the public health, safety, and welfare of the community and visitors to the City on the upcoming Picnic Day; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that specific geographical areas within the City are subject to unique conditions and circumstances on Picnic Day that create the potential for a significant threat to the public health and safety for residents and visitors to the City, as those areas are where it has been determined that the majority of public offenses, nuisance behavior, and violence has occurred in past Picnic Days; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the potential threat to health, safety, and welfare would be reduced by enhanced penalties for violations of certain provisions of the Davis Municipal Code, including provisions regulating the possession of open containers and the consumption of alcoholic beverages in public, general noise, public urination, and public smoking, as the increased penalties are expected to deter illegal behavior, including illegal and/or excessive alcohol consumption and nuisance behavior; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Davis hereby establishes three safety enhancement zones, as outlined in Exhibits A, B, and C attached hereto, that shall be in effect from 6:00 p.m. on April 17, 2026, to 6:00 a.m. on April 19, 2026; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the boundaries of one safety enhancement zone shall be:

- The northern margin on the north side of W. Covell Blvd. and E. Covell Blvd., from the western margin of Shasta Dr., to the eastern margin of Pole Line Rd.;
- The eastern margin of Pole Line Rd., from the northern margin on the north side of E. Covell Blvd., to the southern margin of the Union Pacific rail-line/right-of-way;
- The southern margin of the Union Pacific rail-line/right-of-way, from the eastern margin of Pole Line Rd., to the western margin Union Pacific rail-line/right-of-way where it intersects with the City Limits of Davis;
- The intersect of the City Limits of Davis and the Union Pacific rail-line/right-of-way following the City Limits of Davis to the western margin of A St.;
- The western margin of A St., from the southern margin of the public sidewalk on the south side of First St., to the southern margin of Russell Blvd.;
- The southern margin of Russell Blvd., from the western margin of A St. to the eastern margin of Arlington Blvd;
- The eastern margin of Arlington Blvd., from the southern margin of Russell Blvd to the eastern margin of Shasta Dr.; and
- The eastern margin of Shasta Dr. from Arlington Blvd. to the northern margin of W. Covell Blvd.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the boundaries of the second safety enhancement zone shall be:

- The City park and adjacent pool, known as Slide Hill Park and Manor Pool, located at 2850 Temple Drive, Davis, CA, and 1525 Tulip Lane, Davis, CA, and the attached adjacent public sidewalks.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the boundaries of the third safety enhancement zone shall be:

- The City park and adjacent parking lot known as Walnut Park, located at 2700 Lillard Drive, Davis, CA, and the attached adjacent public sidewalks.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Council directs City staff to post signs at various access points to the designated safety enhancement zones, and throughout the designated areas, warning of the enhanced fines for violations of the specified offenses.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the City Council of the City of Davis on this 3rd day of March, 2026, by the following vote:

AYES:

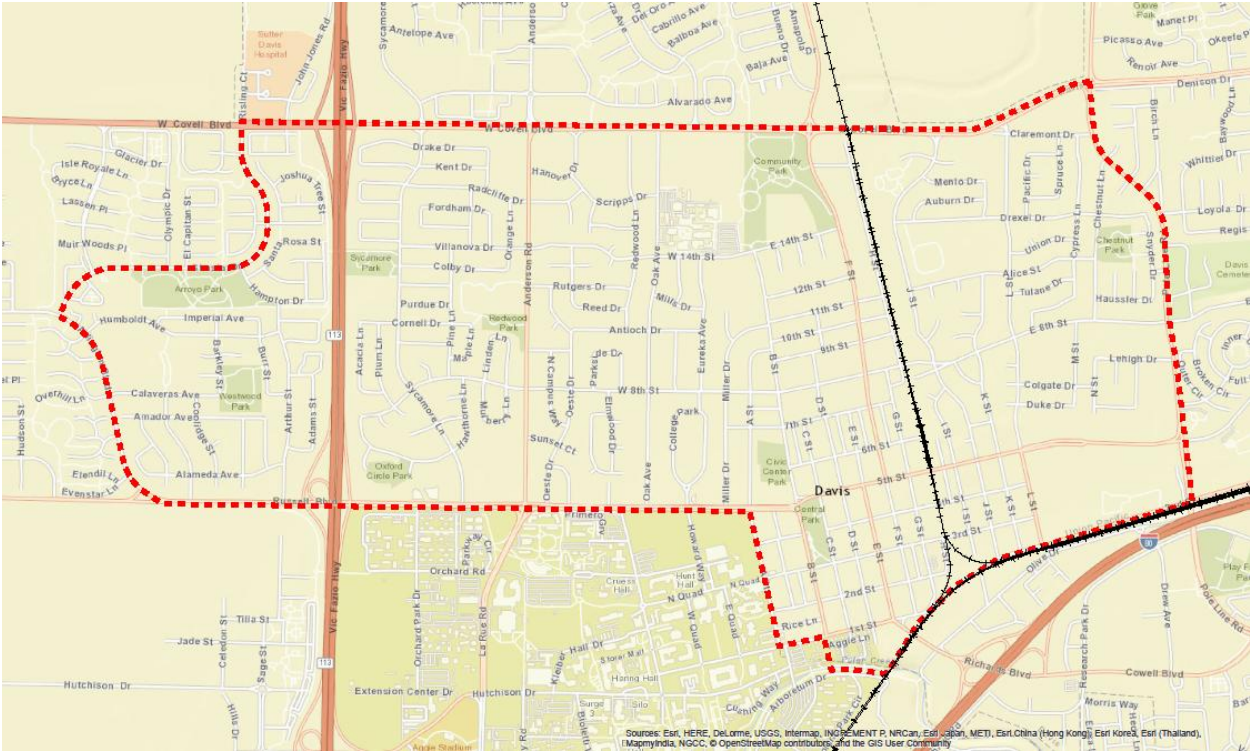
NOES:

Donna Neville
Mayor

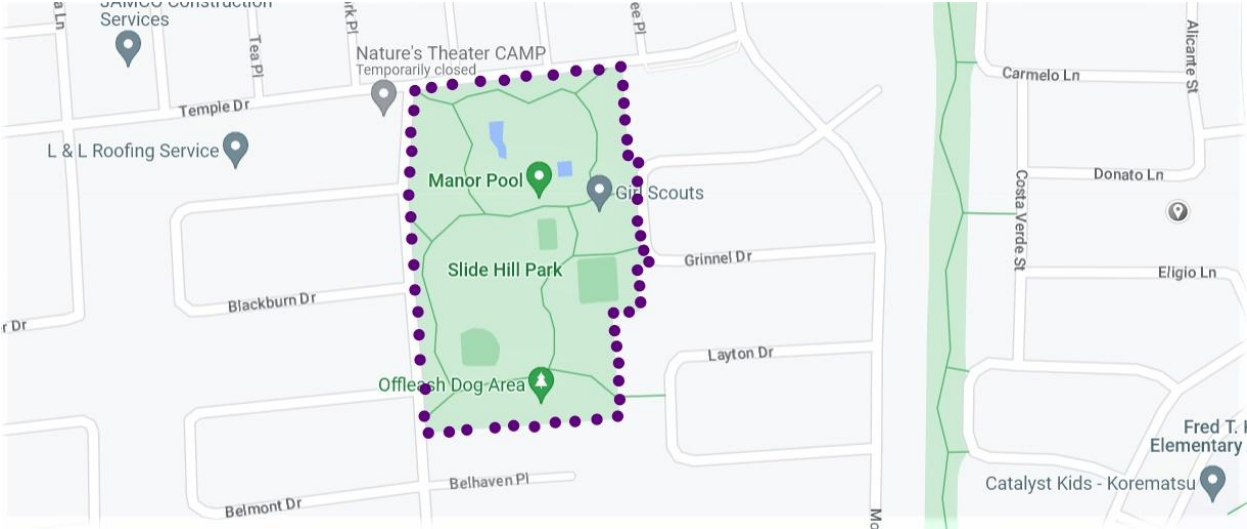
ATTEST:

Zoe S. Mirabile, CMC
City Clerk

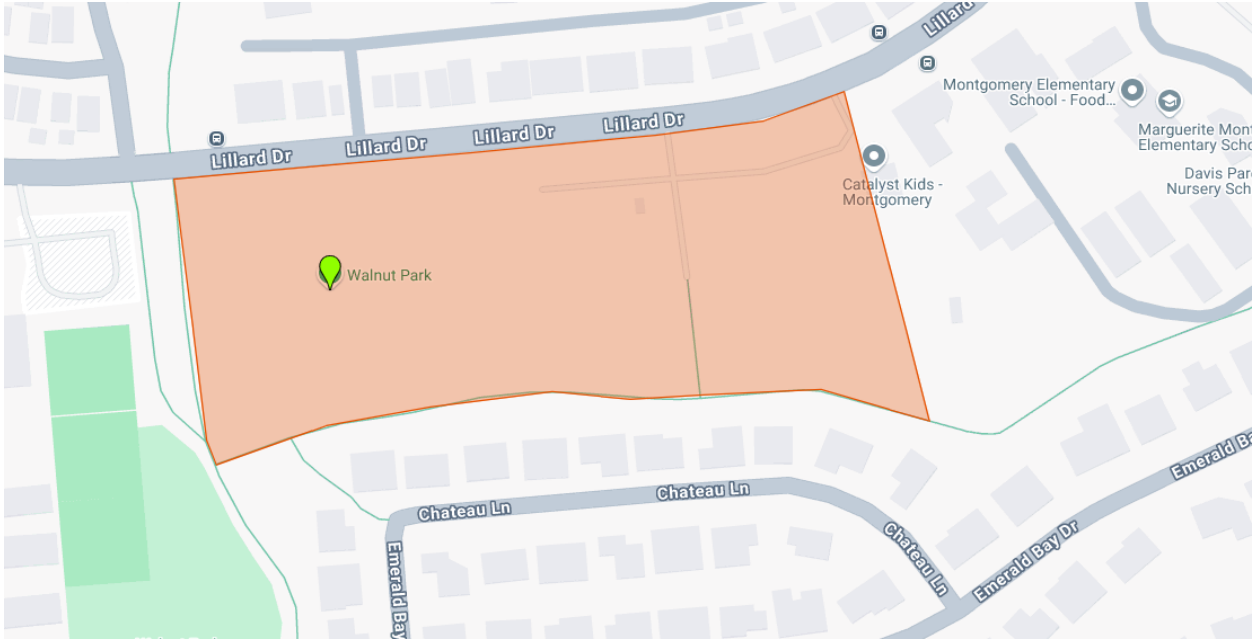
Proposed City of Davis Safety Enhancement Zone for Picnic Day 2026



**Proposed City of Davis Safety Enhancement Zone for Picnic Day 2026
Slide Hill Park**



City of Davis Safety Enhancement Zone for Picnic Day 2026
Walnut Park



RESOLUTION NO. 26-XXX, SERIES 2026

**RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF DAVIS
TEMPORARILY SUSPENDING THE PARK EXCEPTION TO THE PROHIBITION
ON ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION AND OPEN CONTAINERS
IN PUBLIC SPACES FOR SPECIFIED DATES**

WHEREAS, Section 26.04.020 of the City Municipal Code generally prohibits the consumption of alcoholic beverages and the possession of open containers of alcoholic beverages in public streets, sidewalks, bike paths, greenbelts, alleys, highways, off-street public parking lots or structures, and other areas commonly held open to public use, subject to limited exceptions; and

WHEREAS, Section 26.04.020(a)(1) provides an exception permitting the consumption of alcoholic beverages and possession of open containers in certain public parks under normal circumstances; and

WHEREAS, the City Council has authority to regulate the time, place, and manner of alcohol consumption in public spaces to protect the public health, safety, and welfare of the community; and

WHEREAS, Picnic Day attracts a large number of visitors to the City; and

WHEREAS, the City has in the past experienced public safety problems on Picnic Day, including a documented history of alcohol-related disturbances, public safety incidents, medical responses, vandalism, and quality-of-life impacts associated with large gatherings in public parks and public spaces; and

WHEREAS, alcohol consumption in public parks and public spaces on that date has contributed to increased demands on police, fire, emergency medical, and public works resources, reducing the City's ability to respond to other emergencies and essential services; and

WHEREAS, the City Council finds that temporarily suspending the park exception for alcohol consumption on specified dates is a narrowly tailored, reasonable, and proportionate measure to mitigate foreseeable public safety risks while preserving permitted alcohol consumption at authorized special events where appropriate; and

WHEREAS, this temporary suspension is limited in duration and scope and does not amend or permanently alter the Davis Municipal Code.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Davis does hereby resolve that public safety problems historically associated with annual Picnic Day celebrations have created a need to take action to protect the public health, safety, and welfare of the community and visitors to the City on the upcoming Picnic Day; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that notwithstanding the exception set forth in Section 26.04.020(a)(1) of the City Municipal Code, the consumption of alcoholic beverages and the possession of open containers of alcoholic beverages shall be prohibited in all public parks, greenbelts, bike paths, and public spaces commonly held open to the public within the City of Davis effective 6:00 p.m. April 17, 2026, to 6:00 a.m. on April 19, 2026; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that during the time period specified above, violations shall be enforced pursuant to Section 26.04.020 of the Municipal Code. City staff and law enforcement are authorized to take reasonable enforcement actions, including education, warnings, and citations, as appropriate; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that city staff are directed to provide reasonable public notice of the temporary alcohol prohibition, including posting signage and issuing public communications prior to the effective date; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Resolution is temporary in nature and does not amend, repeal, or permanently modify any provision of the City Municipal Code.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the City Council of the City of Davis on this 3rd day of March, 2026, by the following vote:

AYES:

NOES:

Donna Neville
Mayor

ATTEST:

Zoe S. Mirabile, CMC
City Clerk