



# Arapahoe County

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## Board Summary Report

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**File #:** 25-665

**Agenda Date:** 11/25/2025

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**To:** Board of County Commissioners

**Through:** Gini Pingnot, Director, Open Spaces; Glen Poole, Operations Manager, Open Spaces

**Prepared By:**  
Matt Bixenman, Fairground Site Manager, Open Spaces

**Presenter:** Matt Bixenman, Fairground Site Manager, Open Spaces; Lexy Kingsbaker, Event and Business Development Supervisor, Open Spaces

**Subject:**  
10:30 AM \*2027 Fairgrounds Facility Pricing and 2026 Signature Event Plan

**Purpose and Request:**  
Open Spaces staff will present recommendations for 2027 Fairgrounds Facility Pricing and 2026 Signature Event Plan.

**Alignment with Strategic Plan:** Good Governance - Understand and respond to community needs, interests, and values.

### **Background and Discussion:**

#### *2027 Fairgrounds Pricing*

The mission of the Event Center at the Arapahoe County Fairgrounds is to provide educational, agricultural and recreational experiences that celebrate our western heritage and preserve the local prairie environment, while supporting economic and managerial sustainability.

To accomplish this mission, staff strives to ensure event holders receive exceptional customer service while paying a competitive price for their use of a County facility. Visitors to the facility are provided opportunities to attend a wide range of regional and community-based events at a County facility supported by public tax dollars.

The Event Center and Fairgrounds budgets are located in two cost centers within Fund 28. The first cost center is the Heritage Operational Fund (303) which supports day-to-day operations of the facility and covers the cost of staffing, utilities, maintenance, etc. The 303-cost center is funded by the Open Space Sales and Use Tax. Heritage funds cannot fund new building construction. They can only support maintenance and operations of the existing facility.

The second cost center is the Event Revenue Fund (302), which generates revenue through event contracts and associated equipment rentals. This fund does not receive Open Spaces Sales and Use Tax revenue. The 302-cost center currently funds three Fairgrounds employees, serves as a reserve to financially support the County Fair (if needed and approved by BOCC) and any signature events.

The 302-cost center has historically also funded small CIP projects, as the funds are non-restrictive and can be used to support building construction or expansion.

Staff analyzes and adjusts pricing of all the Fairgrounds rental spaces on a biennial basis. Analysis and facility rental rate adjustments are historically based on data from comparable facilities across the Denver Metro area and Front Range (price/sq foot) along with considerations of client's tolerance to rate increases. The former is difficult because venue spaces differ widely and so do their pricing models. This makes it tricky to achieve an apples-to-apples comparison. The latter is accomplished through routine and daily interactions with paying clients. This approach is a widely accepted industry standard.

Staff is recommending a 9% price increase for all the Fairgrounds rentable spaces for 2027. The new rental rates help ensure sustainable operations, quality customer service through a strong staff team, and a well-maintained facility. From 2027 onward, staff will analyze pricing on an annual basis rather than a biennial basis.

#### 2026 Signature Event Plan

Signature event goals include engaging the community through family friendly events, creating exposure for the Event Center, and striving for a high event cost recovery.

Staff had a successful year with the 2025 signature event lineup. Evaluation of the signature event lineup is approached from multiple perspectives including: budget sensitivity (the more staff taps into the 302 fund, the less the county will have in financial reserves to support annual Fair cost overruns); declining signature event attendance; staff capacity for event management, and a desire to invest additional staff resources and event planning bandwidth to support the annual county fair and day to day facility operations.

Staff recommends the Department discontinue hosting the following signature events in 2026: Chalk Lines & Vines, Treat Street, and Visit the Village. Instead, staff recommends the creation of one new signature event to occur in the fall of 2026.

Fall for You Festival is envisioned to be a two-day, family-friendly celebration to include activities such as seasonal drinks, themed activities, live stage entertainment, a festive Treat Street, chili cook-off, chalk art, a special event and more. Tickets will be priced in a manner that is affordable for event attendees while striving to fully recover event costs. This helps preserve the 302 fund balance to ensure the facility operations and annual Fair costs can be met.

**Alternatives:** Approve staff recommendations, approve staff recommendations with changes, or deny the staff recommendations.

**Fiscal Impact:** Fairgrounds Pricing: The 302-cost center currently funds three employees and provides financial support to the annual County Fair and signature events. This account has historically funded CIP projects, as the funds are non-restrictive in their use. The Revenue Fund consists of revenue from rental events which is crucial for our future growth and expansion of the Fairgrounds facility. Approval of a 9% pricing increase in 2027 rental rates assists with higher revenue intake which will be applied to the overall fund.

Signature Event: The budget for the 2026 signature event will be funded by the event rental revenue

cost center, 302. Approximately \$70,000 is allocated for this event in 2026 with a cost recovery goal of 100%. This represents a 60% decrease in budgetary commitment for signature events from 2025 to 2026 keeping a larger reserve in the 302 fund.

**Alignment with Strategic Implementation Strategies:** The attached framework helps Arapahoe County institutionalize values-based, transparent decision-making, documenting how we make decisions and carry out actions to achieve the county's strategic plan.

**Staff Recommendation:** Staff recommends the BOCC approve the proposed recommendations for the 2027 Fairgrounds Pricing and 2026 Signature Event Plan

**Concurrence:** N/A