



PARKS AND RECREATION PERMITS

Thank you for choosing a Des Moines park for your public event. Parks and Recreation permits allow Des Moines Parks and Recreation to prevent conflicts, make necessary maintenance preparations, and provide exceptional customer service. Our goal is to ensure you have a great event!

Follow the steps on the right to reserve or visit us at 1551 E. MLK Jr. Parkway between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday - Friday. **Park use permits must be made at least 10 days prior to the event.**

Permits are required if any of the following apply:

- Outdoor amplified sound is planned.
- Any equipment is being brought into a park.
- The event is advertised.
- Your event will impact the normal public use of the park.
- The event plans to collect admission fees or sell items.

To find out more about our parks, visit: **Parks Directory**

To inquire about utilizing a Sports Park, visit: **Sports Parks**

To reserve an outdoor or indoor facility, visit: **Des Moines CivicRec**

Questions? Email: **parks@dmgov.org**.

Pricing varies dependent on the facility requested, number of hours, and day of the week. By visiting the Facility Reservation Page, you will find all the details pertaining to the facility. Payment is due when reserving the space.

STEPS TO RESERVE

1

Visit the Facility -
Reservation Page.

2

Check availability of location, date, and time for your event.

3

If available, provide contact information and details of event.

4

Submit the permit request and pay the total amount.

5

Staff will review the permit and provide resources needed to fulfill permit.

PARKS AND RECREATION PERMITS

TIMEFRAME

- Reservations must be made at least 10 days prior to the event and up to 365 days in advance.

FACILITY HOLD HARMLESS

- A user must agree to the Facility Use Requirements and sign the Facility Hold Harmless waiver that is included in the reservation system.

ATTENDANCE/EVENT DETAILS

- A user must provide approximate attendance and event details in the reservation system.

SOUND PERMIT

- Required by the City any time there is amplified sound outdoors. This permit can be obtained online after receiving letter from Des Moines Parks and Recreation. A letter will be created once permit has been reviewed. The phone number for the Permit and Development Center is (515) 283-4200 or visit the [Customer Self Service](#) portal to apply, pay, and access documents.

SPECIAL EVENT PERMITS/STREET USE

- The City of Des Moines plays host for many special events throughout the year. If you would like to hold your event on city streets in Des Moines, access the [Customer Self Service](#) portal. Street closures, parade permits, Timed Athletic Event permits, and more can be obtained through the City Manager's Office. The applications must be submitted no later than 90 days prior to the event. Email questions to StreetUse@dmgov.org.

CLEAN UP

- Contractual Responsibilities: Leave the park, trails, and grounds in an orderly, clean fashion. Failure to comply with this policy will result in a \$50 per hour charge (minimum 2-hour charge \$100).

AVAILABLE FACILITIES

- Amphitheaters
- Aquatic Centers, Swimming Pools, and Wading Pools
- Brenton Skating Plaza
- Christine Hensley Terrace at Gray's Lake Park **(Closed for 2025)**
- Community Recreation Center Multi-Purpose Rooms and Gyms
- Enclosed and Open-Air Shelters
- Floral Gardens
- John and Mary Pappajohn Sculpture Park
- Open Spaces
- Sports Courts
- Sports Parks
- Trails
- Western Gateway Park

ELECTRICITY

- Standard electrical outlets can be used without charge but are not part of the permit/reservation and are not guaranteed to be in working order due to exposure to the elements

HOURS

- Each permit/reservation will go no later than 9 p.m. or when the park closes, whichever one is sooner. No person shall remain in or on any city park from 10:00 p.m. until 6:00 a.m. Your permit does not allow you to close the park to the public.
- Exceptions are made for:
 - Concerts at the Simon Estes Amphitheater. This facility may remain open until 12:00 midnight.
 - Prairie Meadows Riviera Amphitheater at Riverview Park. This facility may remain open until 12:00 midnight.
 - Birdland Marina. This facility may remain open until 11:00 p.m.
 - Brenton Skating Plaza. This facility may remain open until 12:00 midnight.
 - Western Gateway Park and John and Mary Pappajohn Sculpture Park. This facility may remain open until 12:00 midnight.
 - Gray's Lake Park. This facility may remain open from 6:00 a.m. until 10:00 p.m. from November 1 - March 31 and from 5:00 a.m. until 10:00 p.m. from April 1 - October 31.
 - Principal Riverwalk (excluding trails and trail heads): These facilities may remain open until 2:00 a.m.
 - Multi-use recreational trails. These facilities shall always be open.
 - James W. Cownie Soccer Park, James W. Cownie Baseball Park, George Davis Softball Park, Savage Softball Fields at Easttown Park and Carney Softball Fields at Carney Park. These facilities may be open until 12:00 midnight.

TURF/GRASS

- There is absolutely no driving permitted anywhere on the turf/grass/sidewalks within a park.
- All items and tents must be weighted, not staked.

PARK ORDINANCES AND RULES

Parks and Recreation ordinances are part of the City of Des Moines Municipal Code. Read our ordinances online and understand how they impact your use of the City's parks and trails: [Park Ordinances and Rules](#).

INFLATABLES

- If a user intends to have a bounce house or inflatable, the equipment provider is required to provide their certificate of insurance to Parks and Recreation at parks@dmgov.org.
- Inflatables cannot be rented from a local store and operated by the user.
- All inflatables must be weighted down rather than staked and electricity is not guaranteed in the park system. Use of generator is highly recommended.

ALCOHOL

- It is unlawful for any person to use, possess or consume beer, wine or alcoholic liquor in any city park, including all park roads and parking areas in parks, except by issuance of a permit or pursuant to a concession agreement and either:
 - Approval of the parks and recreation board; or
 - Such use, possession or consumption is in an enclosed park shelter; or
 - Such use, possession or consumption is within the Clare and Miles Mills Rose Garden, Sylvan Theater or the Lilac Arboretum; or
 - Such use, possession or consumption is within specified areas of the Principal Riverwalk including Long Look Garden, Brenton Skating Plaza and plaza adjacent to World Food Prize building; or
 - Such use, possession or consumption is during an adult event at the Carney Softball Fields, James W. Cownie Soccer and Baseball Parks, or George Davis Softball Park. Such use, possession or consumption is allowed at fields at James W. Cownie Soccer Park, Savage Softball Fields at Easttown Park, and George Davis Softball Park in use for adult events except when other fields are in use for youth events; or
 - Such use, possession or consumption is within the park between Tenth and Fifteenth Streets and Grand Avenue and Locust Street a/k/a "Western Gateway Park"; or
 - Within Riverview Park or in conjunction with the Prairie Meadows Riviera Amphitheater at Riverview Park.
- The permit must be obtained from the Parks and Recreation Director or his or her designee.
- In addition to the above requirements, a state liquor control license and approval of the Parks and Recreation Board is required to use, possess or consume keg beer or alcoholic liquor, except for use, possession or consumption within Western Gateway Park, Birdland Marina and Christine Hensley Terrace and Terrace building and designated outdoor areas.
- No person shall be intoxicated or simulate intoxication in a city park.

TENTS

- Permits are also required by the City when certain tents are used. A tent requires a certificate of flame proofing and can be obtained from the Fire Prevention Bureau at Ninth and Mulberry.
- The phone number for the Fire Prevention Bureau is 515-283-4240 or visit the [Fire Prevention Bureau website](#).

FENCING

- Temporary fencing is allowed, but it is the responsibility of the user for scheduling and payment of the fencing. All fencing must be temporary where no poles, posts or stakes are allowed to penetrate the ground. To protect the underground utilities and irrigation system, the fencing must use a stand or base to support the panels.

MOBILE FOOD VENDORS AND TRANSIENT MERCHANTS

- Mobile vendors operating mobile vendor vehicles may be located or operated in the following parks:
 - Greenwood Park
 - Ashworth Park
 - Union Park
 - Grandview Park
 - Ewing Park
 - MacRae Park
 - Simon Estes Amphitheater Plaza
 - Evelyn K. Davis Park
 - Riverview Park
- Every mobile food vendor and transient merchant operating or locating a mobile vendor vehicle within the above designated parks must have a mobile food vendor or transient permit issued by the parks and recreation director.
- An application for such permit must be made by visiting our office at 1551 E. MLK Jr. Pkwy from 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. Monday - Friday or apply [online](#) at least three (3) business days prior to use.
- The parks and recreation director may designate dates within the permit period during which mobile vendors are prohibited from operating within the designated parks.
- The application must include a copy of the applicant's mobile vendor or transient merchant license issued by the city clerk and payment of the application fee of \$200 for an annual permit or \$25 per day for a 1-day permit.
- Annual permits shall be in effect for one year, or portion thereof, from April 1 through October 31 of each year.
- The permit must be displayed in a manner such that it is readily visible to all persons seeking to conduct business with the mobile vendor.
- Food vendor vehicles may only use one (1) parking space. No tables/chairs are allowed to take up more room.

CONCESSIONS

- A Temporary Concession Permit is required by the City for all vendors interested in selling products. When applying, a fee will be collected by the City in exchange for the opportunity to conduct business on public property. These forms will be sent via email after the permit is submitted or can be obtained from the Parks and Recreation Administration Office and must be submitted no later than 10 days prior to the event.

BUSINESS LICENSES AND PERMITS (FOOD AND MERCHANDISE)

- When it comes to running a food, merchandise, entertainment, or specific service industry business within the City of Des Moines, there are certain licenses and permits that are required. These are processed and issued through the City Clerk's Office located at City Hall at 400 Robert D. Ray Drive.

CUSTOMER SERVICE SELF PORTAL (SOUND PERMITS AND SPECIAL EVENT PERMITS)

- Customer Self Service (CSS) is the City's permitting, inspection, and licensing software system. Though any person may access public information in CSS, an account is required to make payments, submit permits requests, and conduct other business. For questions on how to set up an account, please review the [CSS Account Setup User Guide](#).



CITY OF DES MOINES RESOURCES

- Customer Self Service – Questions or issues with the CSS portal: (515) 283-4200 or EnerGov-Support@dmgov.org
- Building & Site – Questions or issues with Permits, Building Inspections, & Trade Licensing: (515) 283-4200 or permits@dmgov.org
- Business License - Questions or issues with Business Licensing: (515) 283-4209 or cityclerk@dmgov.org
- Neighborhood Services - Issues with Rental Licensing or Code Enforcement: (515) 283-4046 or nid@dmgov.org
- Parks and Recreation – Questions with Permits: (515) 237-1386 or parks@dmgov.org
- Planning - Questions or issues with Planning & Zoning Applications: (515) 283-4192 or planning@dmgov.org
- Right-of-Way or Parking Permits - Questions or issues with Special Parking permits: (515) 283-4973 or Eng-TT-Web@dmgov.org
- Street Use Permits - Questions or issues with event or street use permits: (515) 283-4037 or StreetUse@dmgov.org

TRAIL USE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

We will not know exactly how many participants are in our event until the day of. How can we pay an accurate fee? *Most events are held annually. If the event has happened before, please use the previous year's participation number when filling out the request form. If the total participation number is higher than projected, we will follow-up post-event to gather the additional fee. If it is lower, we can refund the difference upon request. If this is a first-time event, please estimate the best you can, and we will adjust or refund, as needed.*

How will we regulate honesty? *As with other rental agreements, the estimated number of participants is based on the honor system. However, if event participation estimates are consistently lower and we are not notified post-event, there are systems in place that can count the day-of number of participants. Event organizers will receive a warning in this instance and may be subject to trail use requests being denied on future submissions.*

What if I use only a small portion of the trail system such as the Water Street Bridge, and every other part of my event is on a road, do I still pay \$1 per participant? *No. The event organizer would simply need to pay the fee to reserve the bridge. This is a rare instance and a discussion with staff would be a good first step when identifying the route.*

What do I get for my fee? *An approved trail use permit grants you the right to host an event on the City of Des Moines trails. This also notifies our team to prep the trail accordingly. This does not grant sole use of the trails, but once the permit is issued, we will not issue another trail use permit on the trail sections your events is using. Directional signs can be placed on the side of the trails with permission from Des Moines Parks and Recreation one hour before the events begins and must be removed one hour after the completion of the event. Painting and other marking on the trails, such as stickers, are not allowed and any removal fee will be billed to the permit holder.*

What does the fee pay for? *With the growing use of the trails in Des Moines, maintenance continues to be a challenge. Des Moines Parks and Recreation has dedicated additional resources to this effort with the hopes of doing more to keep the trails at a high standard. With 84 miles of paved and 21 miles of soft trails, maintained year-round, and with an estimated cost of \$1 million dollars to build just one mile of trail, it is more important than ever to collect appropriate fees for ongoing maintenance and future trail growth for the entire community to enjoy.*

If I use more than one section of trail, do I have to pay twice or is this just one fee for as many trail sections as I use for my event? *No. This is a one-time fee which covers as many trail sections submitted for the duration of a single day event during the time listed on the approved trail use permit.*

How long is the permit good for? *The permit is good for the date and duration of time listed on the approved trail use permit.*

Do I get a discount for being a non-profit? *No. We do not have a different fee for non-profit organizations. Most of our trail use permits are issued to non-profit organizations or groups that benefit non-profit organizations.*

If I am having a small event, do I need to get a permit? *Yes. Without a permit your event may conflict with another. An approved trail use permit grants you the right to host an event on the City of Des Moines trails. This also notifies our team to prep the trail accordingly.*

Do I have to include children in my count? *Yes.*

We are only going to be on the trail for 15-20 minutes, do I still have to pay \$1 per person? *Yes.*

Does this give me exclusive use of the trail? *No. A trail use permit does not grant you exclusive use of the trails, but once the permit is issued, we will not issue another trail use permit that overlaps or conflicts with your event if your event follows the plan you provided in your application. Trails are always open to the public.*

What is the refund policy for a trail event? *Refunds will not be made on any cancellation unless notice has been given to Des Moines Parks and Recreation AT LEAST 10 days prior to the date of the reservation. No refunds/rescheduling for inclement weather on the day of the rental. There is a \$10 processing fee for transfers or cancellation (rentals under \$100) and a \$30 processing fee for transfers or cancellations (rentals over \$100).*



STEPS TO RESERVE

1

[Visit the Facility Reservation Page.](#)

2

Check availability of location, date, and time for your event.

3

If available, provide contact information and details of event.

4

Submit the permit request and pay the total amount.

5

Staff will review the permit and provide resources needed to fulfill permit.

PHOTOGRAPHY AND FILMING PERMIT

Des Moines Parks and Recreation authorizes the commercial use of photography or filming through a permit process. Anyone wanting to photograph or film for commercial purposes within Des Moines parks and on trails should purchase and receive a \$10 permit [online](#) prior to doing so. A permit is authorized by the City of Des Moines subject to all pertinent provisions of the law, the Park ordinances, and to the agreement and conditions set forth. The use of City personnel, equipment, and utilities without prior authorization is prohibited.

If a permit is approved, it is understood that permission does not imply nor include permission to photograph individuals using the park facility without their express written permission. The City of Des Moines can grant permission to photograph in Western Gateway Park and Pappajohn Sculpture Park but cannot give permission to photograph the artwork. The artwork is owned by the Des Moines Art Center and permission to photograph is at their discretion.

BRIDGE AND TUNNEL LIGHTING PERMIT

Lighting of bridges and tunnels promotes the City, its civic institutions, state and federal holidays, and other public events of community significance. Des Moines Parks and Recreation accepts community requests for special lighting to recognize a specific cause or to commemorate or enhance a specific event consistent with this purpose. The following features are equipped with L.E.D. lights to illuminate. Submit your application and payment at least 10 days before your event by submitting a permit [online](#). Only 1 color choice is allowed.

- Chris and Marcie Coleman Bridge: The Chris and Marcie Coleman Bridge crosses the Raccoon River connecting Gray's Lake Park to Gray's Station development.
- Iowa Women of Achievement Bridge: The Iowa Women of Achievement Bridge links the east and west sides of Des Moines at the northern edge of the Principal Riverwalk Trail loop.
- Ruan Connector: The Ruan Connector runs beneath Fleur Drive and connects Gray's Lake Park to Water Works Park.

TO BE CONSIDERED

- Requests will be evaluated based on factors including nature of cause/event; history and background of organization; cause/event; how the lighting will benefit the cause/event; the relationship of the lighting to the cause/event; and relevance to the City of Des Moines.
- Des Moines Parks and Recreation may override any existing and confirmed illuminations in support of citywide, national or world emergency observances, and will work with requestors to best accommodate or reschedule the original request.
- No organization may have the light configurations for more than three (3) consecutive days. Total cost is \$150 per feature, per day.
- Des Moines Parks and Recreation endeavors to accommodate as many requests as possible, and requests are typically handled on a first come, first served basis.

FACILITY HOLD HARMLESS WAIVER

Each Park Use Permit holder will review and sign this waiver when completing a reservation.

HOLD HARMLESS AND DAMAGE RESTITUTION STATEMENT

For purposes of this section, City shall mean the City of Des Moines, Iowa, its elected and appointed officials, employees, volunteers and others working on behalf of the City of Des Moines and Facility shall mean the park and/or facility which is referred to in this Application. The undersigned acting on my own behalf or as a duly authorized representative of the applicant, hereinafter called Applicant, for purposes of this agreement, in consideration for the acceptance of this application, agrees to the fullest extent permitted by law, to defend, pay on behalf of, indemnify, and hold harmless the City from and against any and all claims, demands, suits, damages or losses, together with any and all outlay and expense connected therewith, including but not limited to attorney's fees, and court costs, that may be asserted or claimed against, recovered from or suffered by the City by reason of any injury, loss, illness or complications associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, including but not limited to, personal injury, including bodily injury or death, property damage, or loss of use thereof, and economic damages arising out of or in any way connected or associated with Applicant's use or occupancy of the Facility.

Applicant's obligation to indemnify the City contained in this Facility Use Application is not limited by the amount or type of damages, compensation or benefits payable under any workers' compensation acts, disability benefit acts, or other employee benefit acts.

The City shall not be liable or in any way responsible for any injury, damage, liability, claim, loss or expense incurred by Applicant, its officers, employees, subcontractors, and others affiliated with Applicant or Applicant's activities, arising out of or in any way connected or associated with Applicant's use or occupancy of the Facility, except for and only to the extent caused by the negligence of the City of Des Moines, Iowa.

Applicant expressly assumes full responsibility for any and all damages to the facility arising out of or in any way connected or associated with Applicant's use or occupancy of the Facility including, but not limited to, the activities of Applicant, its officers, employees, subcontractors, and others affiliated with Applicant or Applicant's activities. The Applicant and its insurance company hereby waives all rights of subrogation against the City of Des Moines, including injuries sustained by employees and payable under workers' compensation.

Applicant agrees to pay the City of Des Moines, Iowa for the cost of the time and materials necessary for the City to repair damage to City of Des Moines, Iowa property resulting from the actions and activities performed under this Permit.

Applicant shall ensure that its activities on the Facility will be performed and supervised by adequately trained and qualified personnel and Applicant will observe, and cause its officers, employees, subcontractors and others affiliated with Applicant or Applicant's activities, to observe all applicable safety rules.

Further, the undersigned agrees to be liable for any damage to the park, facility and/or equipment, except for normal wear and tear resulting from this use, and to pay in a timely fashion any and all costs associated with returning the park, facility, and/or equipment to the condition that existed prior to said use.