

The Record • Statement

Merry Christmas. Now take it to a park.

Why the Burbank Republican Party opposes closing Magnolia Boulevard for Holiday in the Park

Burbank Republican Party • September 30, 2026

On Friday, November 20, more than a mile of Magnolia Boulevard will be shut down for Holiday in the Park. Sponsorships top out at \$20,000. Booths run up to \$1,000. The City has told us in writing that it cannot check whether the vendors pay Burbank's sales tax. Nobody asked the neighbors. And Burbank has 26 parks. We love Christmas. We just think it belongs in one of them.

A word before we begin

Let's get this out of the way. We are not Scrooges. Nobody at the Burbank Republican Party is against Christmas, Hanukkah, twinkle lights, Santa Claus, or kettle corn. Some of us are very much for kettle corn.

This is not about the holidays, and it is not about tradition. It is about a public street, a private price list, and the people who live and work on that street and were never asked. We like Christmas so much we think it deserves a park.

We're not against Christmas. We're against closing a street that 20,000 cars use every day so somebody can rent it out by the square foot.

Only two people have to approve this.

Damian Skinner

Public Works Director

Rafael Quintero

Chief of Police

No Council vote. No hearing. No neighbors.

They can say no. We're asking them to.

A holiday with a price list

Holiday in the Park is advertised as free, and for the families walking in, it is. For everybody else there is a menu. We read it. Here is what the organizer's own listing offers for sale:

Sponsorship package	Price
Presenting Sponsor	\$20,000
Shuttle Sponsor	\$10,000
Main Stage Sponsor	\$10,000
Community Stage Sponsor	\$10,000
Art Show Sponsor	\$10,000
Entertainment Sponsor	\$3,000
Community Partner	\$1,500
One of each	\$64,500

That's just the sponsors. Vendor booths run from \$400 to \$1,000. Food booths are \$800, plus \$275 in permits. Even the classic cars pay rent: \$40 a vehicle, for about 70 spaces. The event advertises more than 300 vendors. If 300 booths paid only the lowest listed rate, that's \$120,000 before a single sponsor writes a check.

That's not a bake sale. That's a business plan.

And it's a growing line of business. The same team runs Magnolia Park's Food Truck Fridays. In March it emailed Burbank businesses to announce a second street fair on Magnolia, Hollywood Way to Buena Vista, "similar in size and scope to Holiday in the Park," with "corner placement upgrades" and "priority location options" for sale. Corner placement upgrades. On a public street. Friends, that's not a block party. That's a real estate listing.

Now, nobody is accusing anybody of breaking the law. The organizer is a registered nonprofit, and raising money is what nonprofits do. We're simply saying that when there is this much money on the table, the folks collecting it have every reason in the world to want the street closed again next year. The folks who live on that street don't get a cut.

When somebody tells you it's not about the money, it's about the money.

Forty thousand of our closest friends

The organizers say Holiday in the Park draws more than 40,000 people. Lately they say 50,000. We live here. We've walked Magnolia on event night. We have never seen anything close to 40,000 people on that boulevard, and nobody has ever published a count that would show it. That number does a lot of work. It sells the sponsorships. You'd think somebody would want to prove it.

Forty thousand people on Magnolia would be shoulder to shoulder from Hollywood Way to Buena Vista. Go walk it yourself. You won't have to turn sideways once.

Twenty thousand cars have to go somewhere

As of the last City traffic study we examined, more than 20,000 cars passed through that stretch of Magnolia Boulevard every single day. That was then. Burbank hasn't gotten any emptier.

Close more than a mile of it on a Friday evening, and those cars don't evaporate because somebody hung a wreath. They pour onto the side streets, past homes, past kids on bikes, past folks trying to get home from work. Ambulances and fire engines have to find another way around. Magnolia is a very, very busy street. It isn't fair to the neighborhood to shut it down.

Those cars don't go to the North Pole. They go down your street.

We went store by store

We went through the Magnolia Park merchant directory business by business and asked one plain question: can this business make money while the curb is barricaded and a vendor tent is pitched outside the door?

Business	Event night
Antique and furniture stores. Somebody falls in love with a dresser. Wonderful. Now where does the truck park? You can't carry a dresser through a crowd and a row of booths.	Loses
Hardware store. Contractors and homeowners pull up, load lumber and paint, and go. Nobody hauls a ladder past a Ferris wheel.	Loses
Hair salons, lash studios, estheticians. They sell time in a chair. A client who can't park cancels, and that hour is gone for good.	Loses
Florist. Regulars stay home and the delivery van can't get out. It's the Friday before Thanksgiving week, when people order centerpieces.	Loses
Dry cleaners. A drive-up business. If you can't pull up, you don't come.	Loses
Auto body and repair. Cars can't get in, and finished cars can't get out.	Loses
Gyms, martial arts and fitness studios. Four to ten on a weeknight is their prime time. Parents can't drop kids at class.	Loses
Physical therapy and hand therapy. Their patients are exactly the people who need to be dropped at the door.	Loses
Law offices, realtors, professional offices. Clients can't park, so the appointment moves to another day or another office.	Loses
Production rental houses. Their whole job is loading trucks.	Loses

Business

Event night

Sit-down restaurants. Regulars avoid the crowd, and the visitors already ate at the food truck out front. A pop-up kitchen on your curb is competition, not foot traffic.

Mostly loses

Boutiques, vintage, collectibles. Plenty of browsing. Less buying. And the booth outside is selling the same kind of thing.

Toss-up

Grab-and-go food. Pizza by the slice, donuts, ice cream, coffee. A hungry crowd on foot is good business.

Wins

Count them up. A handful of shops that sell food you can eat while walking come out ahead. Nearly everybody else on the boulevard loses a day: the people who sell furniture, haircuts, flowers, dry cleaning, repairs, therapy, fitness, and professional services. For them, a street closure isn't a holiday. It's a day without customers while somebody else rents the curb in front of their door.

You can sell a lot of kettle corn on Magnolia Boulevard. You can't sell a dresser.

Closing Magnolia to help the merchants on Magnolia is like burning down the barn to keep the cows warm.

We asked

We didn't just guess. We asked merchants on Magnolia Boulevard what they thought. Of the merchants willing to speak with us, more than half opposed the closures.

Most of them asked us not to use their names. They worry about being on the outs with the local merchant crowd, and they shouldn't have to. A shopkeeper ought to be able to say "this hurts my business" out loud in Burbank without looking over a shoulder. Until they can, we'll say it for them.

Who's paying the sales tax?

On October 1, Burbank's sales tax goes to 11 percent. That's 11 cents on every dollar, and Burbank's shop owners collect it on every sale, all year long. They file it, they pay it, and when the State auditor knocks, they open the door.

Some folks at City Hall like to say the buyer pays the sales tax. That's true the same way the turkey volunteers for Thanksgiving. A customer walks in with only so much money to spend. Put 11 percent on top of a \$2,000 sofa and that's \$220 the customer doesn't have. So what happens? The customer asks the merchant to knock something off the price, or walks out and buys from somebody at a folding table who isn't charging tax at all. Either way, the merchant eats it. Sales tax comes out of the merchant's pocket, and the vendor who doesn't collect it starts every sale 11 percent ahead.

The transient vendors who set up in front of those stores for one night? We doubt most of them collect a dime of it. Plenty of them deal in cash. For years we've asked food truck operators and vendors to prove they pay it. We've sent letters. We've sent emails. Not one of them has ever replied.

And don't expect the City to check. We asked. In writing. Here is what Burbank's then Assistant City Manager, Judie Wilke, told us. Her words, not ours.

“we can't always confirm if/when they had sales in Burbank.”

“it would likely cost us more to audit then we would receive back”

— Judie Wilke, then Assistant City Manager, City of Burbank

Read that again. The City can't tell whether these vendors sold anything in Burbank, so it won't bother to look. Every one of those booths sits on Magnolia Boulevard, in Burbank. We've got a pretty good idea where the sales happened.

“many of them may not be collecting or even aware of the different local taxes”

“which we think would be extremely difficult.”

— Judie Wilke, then Assistant City Manager, City of Burbank

That's the City's number two official admitting that many of these vendors may not be collecting Burbank's local tax at all, and calling the job of checking “extremely difficult.” Two years later we asked again.

“we do not enforce the collection of sales tax for any business.”

— Patrick Prescott, Community Development Director, City of Burbank

So let's be clear about what the City told us. It can't confirm the sales. It won't pay for the audit. It thinks many vendors may not be collecting the tax. And it doesn't enforce collection at all. Meanwhile the florist down the block files every return on time. The cash table in front of the florist's door gets a free pass.

The City's audit plan is the honor system. It works great for everybody except the honest.

Here is our challenge, and it's a friendly one. If you sell on Magnolia Boulevard and you pay your sales tax, show us the return. It takes a few minutes to download from the State. We'll gladly say so in public.

If you're paying your sales tax, congratulations. Show us the return.

The law, in black and white

You might assume a mile-long street closure goes before the City Council. It doesn't. Don't take our word for it. Here is the ordinance, word for word.

Burbank Municipal Code, Title 6, Chapter 1 · Article 23. Temporary Closing of Streets for Special Events

6-1-2301: Public Works Director Authorized to Grant Permits:

The Public Works Director may, with the concurrence of the Police Chief or their designee, issue a permit to temporarily close and use a portion of any street under the exclusive jurisdiction and control of the City for the purpose of holding celebrations, parades, special events and other activities where in their opinion such closing is necessary for the safety and protection of persons who are to use that portion of the street during the temporary closing.

The Public Works Director, with concurrence of the Police Chief or their designee, may permit the temporary closing of a street only when the use for which the portion of the street is closed serves a public interest or is of such a casual, temporary or occasional nature that **it will not unduly interfere with the public use thereof.**

6-1-2303: Public Works Director to Consider Public Interest:

In granting such permit, the Public Works Director shall have **due regard for the extent of interference**, the timing of the proposed use so as to minimize interference with public use, and shall require, when indicated, appropriate insurance coverage including bodily injury and property damage, protecting the City against liability that might or could arise out of such permitted use.

6-1-2305: Fee:

When, in the estimation of the Public Works Director, the proposed use will require more than ordinary services of the City, **a fee to defray the City's expenses will be charged** as a prerequisite to the granting of the permit.

Read it twice. You won't find the word "resident" anywhere in it. You won't find "notice," "hearing," or "vote." The City Council never weighs in.

And look at the bar the law sets. A closure is allowed only if it "will not unduly interfere with the public use" of the street. More than 20,000 cars a day use that street. If closing it for a festival with \$20,000 sponsorships isn't undue interference, we'd love to know what is.

Nobody asked the neighbors

Here's the part that ought to bother everybody, whatever your party. The neighbors weren't asked.

The residents who lose their parking, listen to the stage until ten at night, and wake up to the trash were treated like they were in the way. The organizers just pushed forward like the street was theirs. It isn't. It's ours.

Nobody knocked. Nobody called. Nobody asked. In this town you get more warning before the street sweeper comes, and the street sweeper doesn't bring a Ferris wheel.

The bill nobody shows us

Burbank's own budget shows a deficit in every year through 2031. The City calls it a structural imbalance. A mile-long street festival takes police officers, traffic control, barricades, cleanup crews, trash hauling, and months of staff time to plan and permit.

The City's answer is always the same: don't worry, we get reimbursed. Wonderful. Show us. We've asked, and they can never prove it. Nobody at City Hall has ever produced an accounting showing that every dollar spent on this event came back. The hours staff spend planning and permitting it aren't fully tracked. The pension and benefit costs that ride along with every one of those hours aren't counted at all. When your bookkeeping can't tell you what something cost, you can't very well tell the taxpayers you got paid back for it.

Don't take our word for it. The last time we checked, we asked the City for the time records of every employee who worked on Holiday in the Park. Here is what the City wrote back about its own planning staff:

“all three employees are salaried, so they do not receive overtime pay and do not log time worked on individual projects.”

— City of Burbank, response to our public records request

They don't log the time. So when the City says it got reimbursed for its staff, reimbursed for what, exactly? You can't bill for hours you never counted.

If the event pays its own way, show us the bill. We'll wait.

Police are not private security

Burbank police officers are sworn to protect the whole city, not to stand guard over a private organizer's sponsors and booths. Yet that's exactly what the public records show. Here's what we found the last time we checked:

15

sworn Burbank police
personnel assigned to
Holiday in the Park

7

of them detectives,
sergeants, and lieutenants:
three detectives, two
sergeants, two lieutenants

\$147.46

an hour, the top rate paid on
that detail, before pension
and taxes

\$15,431.54

in police pay for one evening,
before the 24.01 percent
state pension charge and
taxes

Detectives. Sergeants. Lieutenants. The same Burbank that keeps telling us it's short of officers somehow found fifteen of them for a street fair, at overtime rates that run as high as \$147.46 an hour. A private security guard runs about \$21 an hour. You could hire seven guards for what one of those hours costs, and the detectives could go back to detecting.

There's nothing wrong with a lieutenant. There's plenty wrong with paying one \$147 an hour to watch a funnel cake stand.

Here's what the ten highest-paid officers in each rank cost the taxpayers in one year, added together: salary, overtime, other pay, pension, and health benefits. Then we divided by a full-time year of 2,080 hours each, and worked out what one hour of their overtime pays.

Top 10 in each rank	Total cost, one year	Cost per hour	Overtime rate per hour
Police Lieutenants	\$3,829,803	\$184.13	\$120.56
Police Sergeants	\$3,902,138	\$187.60	\$108.35
Police Detectives	\$3,341,220	\$160.64	\$95.84
All 30	\$11,073,161		

That's more than \$11 million a year for thirty officers, and it doesn't include the overhead of the City departments that hire them, pay them, and manage them. One hour of a top lieutenant buys you almost nine hours of a private guard.

When a business throws a big party, it hires private security. A festival that sells \$20,000 sponsorships can do the same. Every officer standing at a barricade on Magnolia is an officer who isn't answering a call somewhere else in Burbank. Hire private security for the event, and call the police only if something actually happens. That's how it works for everybody else.

And now the City wants more. Burbank has just put another tax increase on the ballot, Measure C. Meanwhile, the City's own payroll records show it paid out **nearly \$22 million in overtime in a single year**, with 151 employees collecting more than \$50,000 each in overtime alone. On the police side, one detective took home \$74,424 in overtime. One sergeant, \$60,212. Lieutenants, \$54,371, \$51,993, and \$51,239. That's overtime, on top of salaries that already run well past \$300,000 a year in total pay for some of them. See for yourself at paystub.burbank.gop.

A city with an overtime bill like that doesn't need another tax. It needs to get its overtime under control.

Burbank voted for a sales tax to fund essential services. Nobody voted for lieutenants to work the door at a street fair.

There's a park for that

Burbank has 26 parks. By the City's own count, it has 42 parks and facilities. You don't even have to leave the neighborhood. Whitnall Highway Park is just around the corner: a big, beautiful green stretch of nearly nine acres across its north and south sections. Put the lights, the stage, and the Ferris wheel there, and Magnolia Boulevard stays open for business.

Here's why a park beats a boulevard, every time:

- **No street closed.** Twenty thousand cars a day keep moving, and emergency routes stay open.
- **No merchant loses a day.** The salon, the florist, and the restaurant keep their customers.
- **Parks are built for crowds.** Lawns, restrooms, lighting, and room for booths, stages, and rides are already there.
- **Parking already exists.** Park lots and nearby facilities can take the cars instead of residential streets.
- **Safer for families.** Kids can run around a park without a single car nearby.
- **Easier to police.** A contained park takes fewer officers than a mile of open boulevard.
- **Cheaper for the City.** Fewer barricades, less traffic control, simpler cleanup.
- **The price is already posted.** Burbank rents its parks for a published fee. A resident pays \$90 to \$225 for a four-hour reservation. Everyone can see what the organizer pays.
- **No neighborhood gets stuck every year.** Festivals can rotate among parks across the city.
- **Nobody wakes up barricaded in.** Residents keep their parking, their driveway, and their Friday night.

- **It's always possible.** Not “whenever possible.” Always. There is no festival on earth that has to happen in the middle of Magnolia Boulevard.

And here's the best part. The event is already called Holiday in the Park. We're just asking them to read their own sign.

A street is for getting where you're going. A park is for staying awhile.

What we are not saying

We are not saying the volunteers are bad people. We are not saying the families who come are doing anything wrong. We are not against a single light, song, or Santa. We are saying that a public street is not a private venue, that the people who live and work on it deserve a say, and that a city with 26 parks has no business closing a road that carries 20,000 cars a day so somebody can sell a corner upgrade.

The ask

- **No street closures for private events.** The Burbank Republican Party opposes them. Not “rethink.” Not “limit.” Oppose.
- **Move Holiday in the Park to a park.** We respectfully ask Public Works Director Damian Skinner and Police Chief Rafael Quintero, the only two officials the code requires, to decline the closure and help the organizer find a park.
- **Show the bill.** Publish the full City cost of every street event, staff time included, next to the fee the organizer paid.
- **Private security, not police.** Organizers hire their own security. Police respond only to an actual incident.
- **Proof of sales tax as a condition of any vendor permit.** A seller's permit and a recent return, or no booth.
- **Ask the neighbors first.** Before anything touches a neighborhood, the people who live there get written notice and a voice.

Where the law stands

Fair is fair. California's Vehicle Code, section 21101(e), lets a city temporarily close a street for celebrations and special events, and Burbank's ordinance copies that language almost word for word. But that power is narrow, and California courts have said so.

Citizens Against Gated Enclaves v. Whitley Heights Civic Association (1994) 23 Cal.App.4th 812. A Hollywood neighborhood got permission to put gates across its public streets. The Court of Appeal struck the gates down, and it put the principle plainly: “The streets of a city belong to the people of the state, and every citizen of the state has a right to the use thereof.” Any power to close a street has to come from an express grant by the Legislature. If a neighborhood can't close its own streets to outsiders, it's fair to ask how a festival organizer gets to close more than a mile of everybody else's.

***Rumford v. City of Berkeley* (1982) 31 Cal.3d 545.** The California Supreme Court threw out Berkeley's street barriers. The State, not the city, controls traffic on public streets, and a city may close a street only in the ways the Vehicle Code allows. The residents who sued were also sent back to the trial court to seek their attorney fees under California's private attorney general statute, Code of Civil Procedure section 1021.5.

The City has to follow its own rules. Burbank's ordinance allows a closure only if it "will not unduly interfere with the public use" of the street, and it says that when an event needs more than ordinary City services, a fee "will be charged." Not "may." Will. When a city ignores its own law, a court can order it to comply through a writ of mandate under Code of Civil Procedure section 1085.

Every taxpayer has standing. Code of Civil Procedure section 526a lets any Burbank taxpayer sue to stop the illegal spending or waste of public money. If the City is supplying police, barricades, and months of staff time without recovering the full cost the code requires, that is taxpayer money spent on a private event.

We are not your lawyers, and this is not legal advice. It is the law as we read it.

The bottom line

The City claims it recovers these costs. Historically, it can't prove it. It doesn't account for the hidden costs: the staff time spent planning, the meeting after meeting, and the employees pulled away from their normal duties to organize somebody else's event.

We appreciate the spirit of the holidays as much as anybody. But the impact on local businesses and residents is too great, and the cost is too high, to let private interests make money off the inconvenience of a neighborhood.

It's not complicated. Public street. Private profit. Pick a park.

We wish every Burbank family a joyful, healthy holiday season. Go see the lights. Buy the kettle corn. Ride the Ferris wheel. We'll meet you at the park.

Respectfully,

The Burbank Republican Party

Sources. Event date, hours, sponsorship packages, car show fee, vendor count, attendance claims and nonprofit status: holidayinthepark.org and the Holiday in the Park 2026 listing on Eventeny; booth and food fees from the event's vendor applications. The second street fair, Food Truck Fridays, and the "corner placement upgrades" and "priority location options" are from the organizer's email to Burbank businesses. Traffic: City of Burbank traffic count for Magnolia Boulevard between Fairview Street and Niagara Street, obtained by public records request. The closure ordinance is Burbank Municipal Code sections 6-1-2301 through 6-1-2306, quoted from the City's published code. The quotations from Judie Wilke, then Assistant City Manager, are from her emails to us; the quotation from Patrick Prescott, Community Development Director, is from his email to us; all three were sent to the Burbank Republican Party's chairman. The 11 percent sales tax takes effect October 1, 2026 under Measure ER. The deficit figures are from the City's proposed budget for fiscal year 2026-27, discussed in our report **Your Power Bill Is a Tax Bill**. Parks, acreage and rental fees: City of Burbank Parks and Recreation directory, the 2013 General Plan, and the 2025-26 park fee schedule. Merchant views were gathered by the Burbank Republican Party from merchants willing to speak with us. Police staffing, pay rates and planning-staff timekeeping: City of Burbank and Burbank

Police Department responses to our public records request covering Holiday in the Park; the private security comparison is the national average hourly wage reported by Indeed and Salary.com. Overtime figures: City of Burbank payroll records released under the Public Records Act, searchable at paystub.burbank.gop. Rank totals are the ten employees in each title with the highest total cost to the City. Cost per hour is that total divided by 20,800 hours (ten full-time years of 2,080 hours). The overtime rate is time and a half on the rank's top base hourly rate, before pension or other costs. Cases: *Citizens Against Gated Enclaves v. Whitley Heights Civic Assn.* (1994) 23 Cal.App.4th 812; *Rumford v. City of Berkeley* (1982) 31 Cal.3d 545. Statutes: Vehicle Code section 21101(e); Code of Civil Procedure sections 526a, 1021.5 and 1085. Photo: City of Burbank.