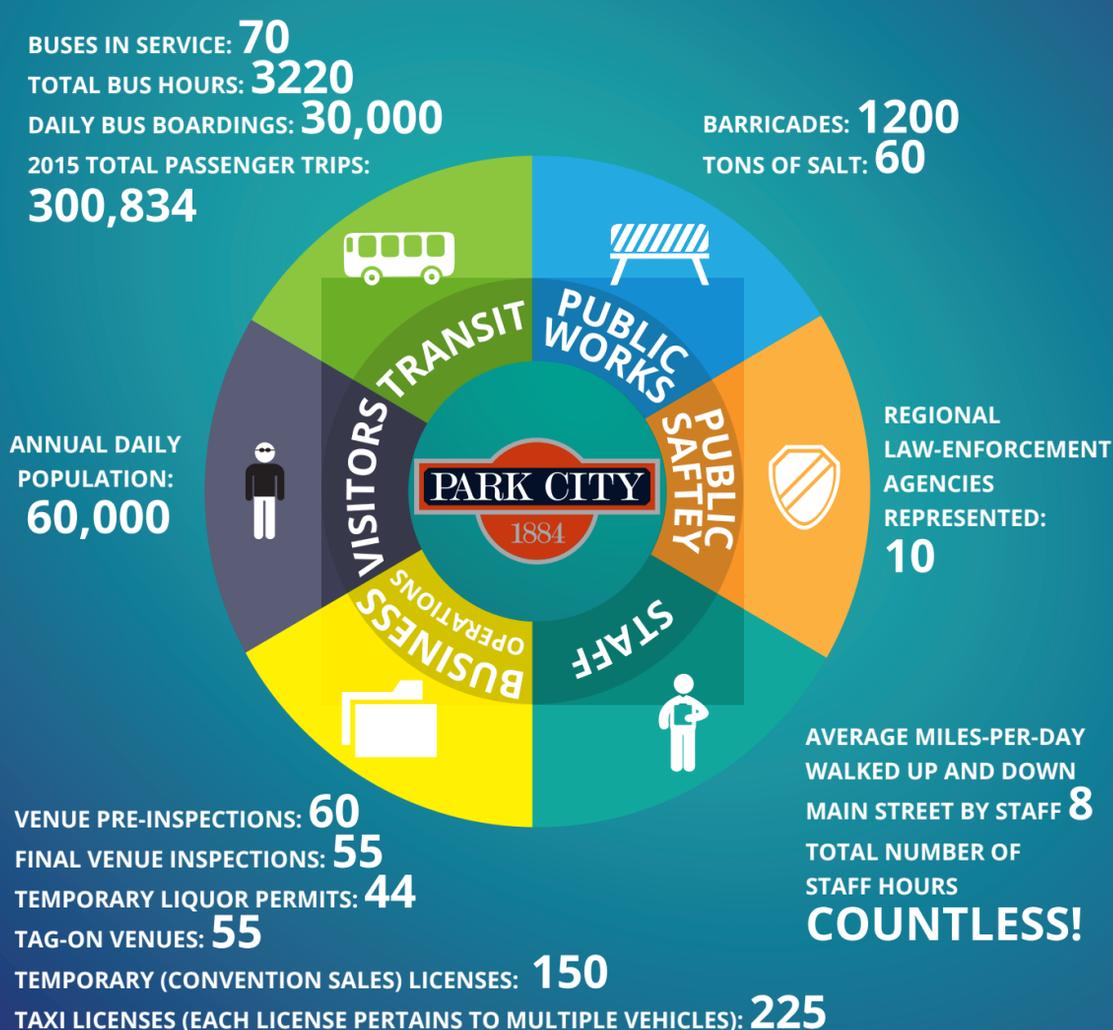


# SUNDANCE BY THE NUMBERS

HOW PARK CITY MUNICIPAL CORPORATION HELPS  
HOST THE LARGEST INDEPENDENT FILM FESTIVAL IN THE COUNTRY



## A CAST OF HUNDREDS

*Park City Municipal Corporation gives its all to help produce the Sundance Film Festival*

The 2016 Sundance Film Festival starts this Thursday, but the preparation at city offices has been going on all year. Nearly every department is involved in helping host the festival. From Transit and Parking to Building and Finance to Police, the city works tirelessly to keep municipal services humming and headache-free. And with nearly 60,000 people in town daily for the duration of the festival, they know they need to get it right.

“The Sundance Film Festival is a magnificent gift to the city,” said City Manager Diane Foster, “and we would like to reciprocate in kind. This is a chance for us to show off our wonderful town, and a huge part of that is making sure the municipal services are all in tip-top shape.”

### Keep Calm & Make a Plan

How does the city staff of a town with 7500 full-time residents help host the country’s largest independent film festival? First things first: plan, plan, plan. Immediately after each festival, the team holds a debrief to identify what worked last time around and what needed improvement. They then set to work planning the next one. “We’ve been the host city for 30 years, but we try to improve and streamline our processes each time around,” said Michelle Downard, Deputy Building Official. “When I started working for the city in 2004, there was no need for weekly cross-department meetings. But the event has grown so much over the years—there are more people, more movies, more venues, more ancillary events. With so much in play, we can’t let anything slip through the cracks.”

One significant change over the past five years has been the number of events not affiliated with the Sundance Institute. These pop-up parties and venues add to the liveliness of the festival, but PCMC needs to make sure they are being safely managed and produced. “The city is, first and foremost, concerned with life safety,” said Downard. “We want to accommodate everyone’s requests, but we need to ensure the venues are code-compliant, especially with so many more people in town.”

### Divide & Conquer: Role Clarity among City Staff

The festival effort spans all city departments, but Building, Finance, Special Events, Planning, Transit, Police, Transportation, and Parking are on the front lines. The MARC and Library are also converted into screening venues. To manage the increased “tag-on” activity, the Building Department strengthened the code for pop-up events and assigned specific staff to conduct pre-inspections and final inspections. The Finance Department has a dedicated staff person to issue temporary business licenses and liquor permits. “Several departments reprioritize staff in the weeks before the festival to respond to the huge influx of temporary-permit requests,” said Rebecca Gillis, accounting manager. “We want everyone—residents and visitors alike—to enjoy the festival, so we realign resources to make sure our daily business operations are not too adversely impacted.”

The Planning Department issues all conditional-use permits, which govern changes of use within a building. They also review requests for temporary signage and tents. “Main Street is the heart and soul of our town,” said Hannah Turpen, a planner specializing in historic preservation. “We need to make sure we are protecting the integrity of our historic structures.”

Dave Gustafson, one of the city’s project managers, is the chief liaison to the Sundance Festival staff. His duties include managing the city’s role in contracts, properties, and sponsorships. (City-owned property can only be rented to Sundance under the Master Festival License; Mr. Gustafson manages these relationships.) “Sundance is our client, and both their institution and ours are concerned with preserving what makes the festival so special,” said Gustafson. “We work all year to carefully orchestrate these ten days and to make sure everything is seamless. Attendees may have a carefree attitude—and that’s what we want—but nothing is left to chance.”

### City Transit: The Festival’s Circulation System

The number-one issue for city staff during Sundance is transportation: there aren’t nearly enough parking spaces or miles of road to accommodate everyone attending the festival. Enter Park City’s secret weapon: our world-class transit system. “Because the buses mitigate traffic and parking so effectively, I think it’s safe to say that the festival couldn’t occur without them,” said Jason Glidden, economic development program manager in charge of special events. During the festival, city bus service will be doubled, and a private bus line (chartered by the festival) will provide express service and specialized routes, including a “theater loop.” These—like the city buses—are free to everyone. “We accommodate triple the regular ridership during Sundance,” said Destry Pollard, Transit operations team leader. “That we do it so seamlessly is a testament to the professionalism and dedication of our drivers.”

### Using Data to Ensure a Smooth Ride

For the first time this year, city and Sundance staff will be employing a people-counting software called Blynscy to help manage and mitigate traffic and crowds. This will help reduce chokepoints on both pedestrian and car thoroughfares, as well as at entrances to Sundance venues. “If we can identify bottlenecks ahead of time, we can put mitigation plans into effect,” said Alfred Knotts, Park City’s transportation planning manager. Blynscy, in tandem with the buses’ GPSes and automated passenger counters, can also help staff evaluate ridership levels and adjust the bus dispatches accordingly. Lastly, it can communicate volume through major intersections in real time.

### Why all the Fuss?

As part of the Park City Municipal’s contract with the Sundance Film Festival, the city contributes \$250,000 in in-kind services. Additionally, the city and Chamber of Commerce jointly pay \$300,000 in sponsorship. By every consideration, this is money and time well spent. The festival brings in over \$60-million statewide, with nearly three-quarters of the movies being screened in Summit County. The resulting revenue helps local businesses maintain a healthy bottom line and provides residents with a higher standard of living. “This is truly a labor of love,” said Downard. “The festival requires a lot from staff, but we all realize how important it is to the city and community.”

And it isn’t just about the money. “A cultural event like this—held in our backyard, no less—enriches all of us,” said Glidden. “Park City takes great pride in our artistic institutions, so hosting a festival of this magnitude and prominence is very much in keeping with who we want to be as a city.”

Art—as they say—feeds the soul, and Park City will be enjoying a magnificent feast over the next 10 days. But it wouldn’t happen without the dedicated staff of Park City Municipal Corporation, so let’s raise a glass to our heroes who work so tirelessly behind the scenes.