



Agenda Item Report

Legislative Board: City Council
Date: December 2, 2025
Contact: Hannah Kriese
Agenda Item ID / Number: 2025-1030- / H.1

ITEM TITLE: Presentation on upcoming 2025 holiday events including Budafest on December 5-7 and Buda Holiday Lights on December 10-13 and December 17-20 (Community Relations and Destination Services Director Lysa Gonzalez and Parks & Recreation Director Tony Host)

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Budafest

Budafest 2025 is scheduled for December 5–7 and will feature a full weekend of holiday programming, including the annual tree lighting, Downtown Cocoa Jingle, craft and food vendors, carnival attractions, photos with Santa, performances, the Reindog Parade, and the Lighted Night Parade with fireworks. Due to the relocation of the Train Depot and ongoing downtown improvements, the festival layout has been reconfigured to optimize vendor placement, parade staging, and parking. The approved event budget for FY 2026 is \$76,204, of which \$55,577 has been spent or committed to date.

Buda Holiday Lights

Buda Holiday Lights (formerly Trail of Lights) is a festive celebration on Dec. 10-13 and Dec. 17-20, 6-9 pm. The event features 65,000 lights, displays by local vendors, food trucks, and nightly visits from Santa Claus and Mrs. Claus and offers shuttle services from Cabela's. In addition, Dec. 10 is a special Older Adult Night in partnership with the Buda Lions Club, with shuttle services from the Onion Creek Senior Center. No shuttle buses are provided from Cabela's on Dec. 10. Buda Holiday Lights will also feature a special Sensory-Friendly Night on December 17, from 5-7pm. This evening is designed to create a quieter, more sensory-friendly environment, ensuring that everyone can enjoy the holiday magic comfortably. The park will also feature designated quiet spaces for those who need sensory breaks during the entire span of Buda Holiday Lights. Buses will not run on Dec. 17.

Installation of vendor displays took place November 10-30. Shuttle buses will run from Cabela's on December 11-13 and 18-20 6-9 pm. The event also includes volunteer opportunities, with Sunday designated as a rain makeup day if needed. This holiday gathering promises to be a memorable experience for all ages.

2. BACKGROUND/HISTORY

Budafest is the City of Buda's signature holiday event and has grown into a three-day festival attracting residents and visitors from across the region. Traditional activities include the tree lighting ceremony, vendor markets, carnival rides, holiday performances, and two popular parades. Event attendance and programming have expanded significantly in recent years, prompting the need for flexibility in event layout and traffic management.

For 2025, the recent relocation of the Train Depot to the Downtown Buda Greenbelt created the need to adjust vendor spaces, carnival placement, and parade staging areas. These changes are designed to improve traffic flow, reduce neighborhood disruptions, and enhance the overall visitor experience.

Event Details

Event Dates and Hours

- Friday, December 5: 6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.
- Saturday, December 6: 12:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.
- Sunday, December 7: 12:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Friday Activities:

Holiday Tree Lighting, Downtown Cocoa Jingle, Ornament Market, ornament making with Inspired Minds Art Center, and launch of the Nutcracker Scavenger Hunt.

Saturday Activities:

Food and craft vendors, snowslide, carnival, photos with Santa, stage performances, Lighted Night Parade with fireworks, and a special holiday performance by the Johnson High School Band at the Buda Amphitheater.

Sunday Activities:

Food and craft vendors, snowslide, carnival, photos with Santa, and the annual Reindog Parade.

3. ANALYSIS

Event Layout Changes

- Vendor Relocation:
Due to the Train Depot relocation, vendor booths will be repositioned along Main Street, as well as portions of Elm Street and Ash Street. An additional vendor area will be located within Buda City Park on the west side of the pavilion.
- Carnival Relocation:
The carnival area is moving from its traditional park location to the East Parking Lot, occupying roughly half of the lot. The remaining half will remain open for public parking.
- Parade Staging Adjustments:
Parade staging will now take place in the North Lot of City Park and along the Buda Amphitheater driveway.
 - This reverses the parade route flow: entries will travel north to south, ending at China Street.
 - The new configuration reduces the required road closures—from closing a residential neighborhood to closing only China Street.
 - Staff needs for road closure management will decrease from 12+ staff to approximately 4, increasing efficiency and reducing operational costs and staffing strain.

Operational Improvements

These layout modifications aim to:

- Minimize neighborhood disruption
- Improve event flow and safety

- Increase operational efficiency
- Improve accessibility for attendees and vendors

4. FINANCIAL IMPACT

The FY 2026 Budafest budget is \$76,204, reduced from the previous total of \$110,312. Current expenditures/commitments total \$55,577, with some quotes still pending. Additional expenses for supplies, food, and operational needs are expected as the event approaches.

Budget Summary

- Adopted Budget: \$76,204 (excludes salaries and benefits budget)
- Expenses/commitments to Date: \$55,577
- Remaining Funds: \$20,627 (pending final vendor quotes and on-site event costs)

All expenditures remain within the adopted FY 2026 allocation.

Buda Holiday Lights budget: \$80,970.

5. STRATEGIC PLAN/GOALS

SAFE, FUN EXPERIENCES FOR ALL - OUTDOOR CAPITOL OF TEXAS

6. STRATEGIC PLAN OBJECTIVES

Safe, Fun Experiences for All - Outdoor Capital of Texas

7. PROS AND CONS

Pros - creates festive holiday events for Buda residents and brings visitors to the community. Builds a sense of community and furthers Buda's identity.

Cons - events do not generate direct revenue to the City or are offset by donations.

8. ALTERNATIVES

N/A

9. REQUESTED ACTION / SUGGESTED MOTION / RECOMMENDATION

This item is for informational purposes only.

Attachments:

[Presentation - Budafest and Buda Holiday Lights.pdf](#)