



Recommended Budget

Sonoma County Fairgrounds

Department Overview

2023 ADOPTED: \$13,431,046
2024 RECOMMENDED: \$12,294,142
NET DECREASE: \$1,136,904
TOTAL FTE: 27.0

Rebecca Bartling
Chief Executive Officer



Significant Budget Changes for 2024

Salaries and Benefits decrease, \$194,224

- Increases in wage rates and benefit costs per FTE are offset both by a reduction in filled positions and a shift of some services from temporary internal employees to external contractors due to a shortage in the labor pool.

Services & Supplies decrease, \$72,680

- Non-payroll cost increases are primarily due to vendor price increases from inflation and supply challenges, contracted services increases from labor inflation, and utility increase from state approved rate increases. These increases are offset by a savings of \$150,000 from the one-time cost of a dinosaur exhibit in prior year Fair and the impact of cost saving measures taken in 2023.

Capital Expenditures decrease, \$870,000

- Building and facility repairs and improvements and equipment replacement continue. Prior year included additional large capital project of \$750,000.



Fairgrounds Operations - 2023



County Fair 2023 – 11 Days

The Fairgrounds produced the annual Sonoma County Fair.

The “Jurassic Jubilee” themed fair showcased:

- Livestock shows, 4-H and FFA Exhibits, Commercial Exhibits
- Hybrid (live and virtual) Junior Livestock Auction
- Carnival and Midway
- PRCA Rodeo, Barrel Racing, Monster Trucks, and Destruction Derby Shows
- Food and merchandise concessions
- Live concerts, grounds acts and attractions
- Tropical themed Hall of Flowers, “Dinosaurs Around the World”
- Senior Day, Out at the Fair Day, BrewFest, and Aloha Fest



Horse Racing During the 2023 Fair – 7 Days of Racing

The Wine Country Race Meet was held at the Fairgrounds in 2023 with 7 days of racing.

- Returning racetrack special events included:
 - Wine Country Hat Day at the Races,
 - The Derby Dog Dash, and
 - Special Named Races.
- Net racing revenues (after purse payments) continues to decline and the future of thoroughbred racing in Northern California is facing uncertain times.
- The Wine Country Race Meet remains an important part of the annual County Fair:
 - It attracts patrons who may not otherwise attend the Fair, as well as
 - It provides regular fairgoers with yet another source of entertainment.



Interim Events and RV Park 2023

Non-Fair activities included fabulous new and returning events

Country Summer

Sonoma County Harvest Fair

CVLTV8 – b2b cannabis trade show

Dog Shows & Agility Shows

Concerts and Rodeos promoted to the Hispanic community

Home Shows, Gem Shows, Coins Shows, Holiday Craft Shows and more

2024 – the 4th of July Celebration and Fireworks is returning!

2024 – the Harvest Festival Craft Show coming!

Hot Air Ballon Classic

Just Between Friends

Monsters Truck Finals

Barrel Races



see 2024 events at:
[www.sonomacountyfair.com/
pages/calendar-of-events](http://www.sonomacountyfair.com/pages/calendar-of-events)

The RV Park continued to host campers during events and other times but saw declines in contractors staying in the Park while rebuilding homes.



Simulcast Racing Facility – (Jockey Club)

The Jockey Club remained closed during 2023, serving only as a short-term rental facility at times.

- Deferred maintenance budgeted for 2023 will be completed in 2024.
- A cost-effective solution, such as a long-term tenant or an innovative revenue generating operation, continues to be sought to offset ongoing maintenance costs.



Maintenance - Facilities

Building maintenance and renovations ongoing:

- Maintaining equipment and buildings in current working order to avoid additional deferred maintenance.

Deferred maintenance and improvements ongoing:

- Items such as roof repair, dry rot removal and replacement and HVAC repairs continue as budgets and reserves allow.

Communication and security improvements ongoing:

- Grace Pavilion to maintain evacuation readiness.
- Administration building to maintain communication capability during emergencies.

Continued ADA improvements ongoing:

- Maintaining and expanding ADA access to parking, facilities and buildings.



Capital Improvement and Equipment

Capital Equipment Replacement:

- Replacement of aging vehicles, additions of metal detectors.

Capital Improvements:

- Facility improvements to maintain revenue-generation capabilities and provide accessibility for all patrons.
- 2023 saw ADA improvements to the RV Park restrooms.
- 2023 saw a major repair to the Hall of Flowers north wall.
- 2024 will see ADA parking improvements.
- 2024 will see RV Park improvements, including a dog park addition



Sonoma County Fairgrounds – Key Issues

- Maintaining affordability and value proposition of annual County Fair.
- Increasing revenue generation of facility through outreach to new customer base.
- Addressing deferred maintenance of buildings and facilities.
- Managing increased labor, service vendor, supply and utilities costs.
- Managing decreased horse racing revenues and its uncertain future in Northern California.
- Covering rising insurance costs, particularly for older buildings.



2024 Objectives

- Produce a safe, exciting, profitable annual County Fair for all.
- Seek out novel uses of the Fairgrounds campus to increase revenue.
- Perform significant building maintenance to repair leaking roofs and aging HVAC systems.
- Continue to improve fairgrounds emergency readiness.
- Continue to improve fairgrounds security and safety.
- Continue improvements to RV park to attract additional guests.
- Continue to examine opportunities for non-racing activities for the Jockey Club.





Questions/Discussion

