

Strategic Stories

2024–2025 progress report

THE CITY OF Waterloo

More sidewalk clearing to improve winter mobility for everyone

What We've Done

Waterloo experienced a higher-than-average snowfall during the 2024–2025 winter season, with total snow accumulation reaching 320cm compared to 55cm in the previous winter. To help people reach their destinations safely and reliably during the winter months, we invested in more sidewalk plows and an additional loader. Operations were expanded to include snow removal on multi-use paths across the city, starting with paths near schools. We also began clearing snow left by snow plows in intersections to enable safer travel across intersections.

In 2025, we are developing a communications campaign to inform the community about shared sidewalk snow clearing responsibilities and the benefits to others when snow is cleared in a timely fashion. The introduction of an Administrative Monetary Penalty System (AMPS) in 2024 has helped the City enforce sidewalk clearance in a timely manner and encourage compliance. To increase our support for those in need of help to clear their snow, including seniors and people with disabilities who meet specific income requirements, we made enhancements to our intake processes and doubled the number of residents receiving snow clearance support compared to the 2023–2024 winter season.

As we implement these solutions and pilot new ideas, we continue to evaluate and adjust to ensure we are improving winter mobility for everyone.

Impact

- Snow clearance support:
  - 85 individuals supported through Assisted Snow Clearance Program (107% increase from 2023–2024 season)
- Sidewalk clearance compliance:
  - 71% compliance* with work orders issued in 2025
  - 80% compliance* with work orders issued in 2024



* *measured as the proportion of work orders that were resolved by the property owner and did not proceed to a City-initiated clean-up*

Investing in active transportation infrastructure

What We've Done

Since 2024, the City has added 0.75km of multi-use paths and 1.5km of sidewalk to the City's active transportation network, including the Westside Trail near Edna Staebler Public School and a multi-use path along Forwell Creek Road. A new pedestrian crossover was built at St. Moritz Avenue and Copper Street to facilitate safer and easier crossings. We also made improvements to our existing infrastructure by resurfacing 12 walkways and 2.5km of trails.

We upgraded Laurel Greenway trail with new pedestrian lighting and trail improvements at the Brighton Trailhead. We implemented a temporary pathway on Roger Street between Herbert Street and Bowman Street for pedestrian safety until the road is reconstructed in 2028. Six Neighbourhood Bikeways – lower traffic neighbourhood streets serving as important connections in the cycling network – were identified using painted road symbols, signage and wayfinding. Planning and design work is underway for many more active transportation infrastructure improvements across the city, including on Davenport Road, Lexington Road and Union Street East.

Impact

- Expanded active transportation infrastructure:
  - 0.75km of new multi-use paths
  - 1.5km of new sidewalk



Transforming our facilities for net-zero

What We've Done

The City has made significant strides to reduce its corporate greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions with a focus on energy efficiency retrofits and replacement of older building systems in City-owned recreational facilities including Albert McCormick Community Centre (Albert McCormick), RIM Park Manulife Sportsplex and Healthy Living Centre (RIM Park) and Moses Springer Community Centre (Moses Springer). In 2024, the City shifted seven rinks to cold water ice resurfacing, installed EV charging stations at the Waterloo Park Service Building and Waterloo Service Centre, and replaced the heating/cooling system and water heating system with more energy efficient options at Grey Silo Park House.

In 2025, gas hot water heaters were replaced with electric at Albert McCormick and RIM Park, refrigeration plant controls were upgraded at Albert McCormick and Moses Springer, and LED lights were installed at Albert McCormick. Staff also developed a city-wide Building Automation Systems and Controls Strategy and completed designs for future energy/GHG infrastructure retrofits at RIM Park and Moses Springer. A grant application was submitted to the Green and Inclusive Community Buildings Program (GICB) to accelerate additional energy retrofits and systems replacement at RIM Park.

Impact

- Greenhouse Gas Emission reductions:
  - 89 tonnes (75%) GHG reduction at Moses Springer
  - 500 tonnes (~52%) GHG reduction at RIM Park with new systems installed to enable an additional 220 tonnes (~23%) GHG savings once existing natural gas infrastructure reaches end of life, for a total GHG emission reduction of approximately 75%.



Fire prevention, education and response for community safety

What We've Done

To support a growing and more diverse population and enhance fire prevention and public safety, the City hired twelve additional fire fighters, a permanent Assistant Deputy Fire Chief, and a daytime Officer Mechanic. We also increased our fire fighting capacity by purchasing a new rescue truck and pumper vehicle. A Fire Safety Box Bylaw was adopted to ensure critical information is available to firefighters responding to an alarm and to improve emergency response times and keep responders and residents safe. Preplanning software has been implemented to support enhanced operational readiness, and enhancements to our public education program are underway.

Emergency Preparedness is part of Waterloo Fire Rescue Services public education. In 2025, we focused on emergency preparedness for older adults. Displays and other educational information focused on helping seniors prepare, and have conversations with loved ones about what to do before, during and after an emergency.

Impact

- Increased firefighting capacity:
  - 12 new firefighters
  - 2 new vehicles



Planning for affordable housing

What We've Done

The City received approval of a Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF) Grant of $23.4 Million to streamline the approval and development of housing, including affordable housing. These funds have helped us to create new programs and procedures that will make it easier and less costly for homes to be built. We updated our Zoning By-law to enable more housing units to be created within residential areas (four storeys/four units as of right per property) and created an online toolkit to help homeowners understand the approval process for creating additional residential units. Our updated zoning allows for more medium density, missing middle housing along transit corridors and enables mixed-used residential developments in some areas formerly zoned for employment only. To optimize the use of land and speed up approvals, we created a process for reviewing and approving parking reductions on sites containing affordable housing and reduced residential parking requirements in areas throughout the City.

In 2025, the City conveyed municipal lands to non-profit partner, BUILD NOW, for the construction of affordable and attainable homes. Approvals were issued for the first building with 85 affordable rental units to be owned and operated by Union Co-operative. To help non-profit organizations build more affordable rental units, the City issued seven Affordable Housing Rental grants totalling over $1M in 2024 and 2025. These grants will support the creation of 146 new affordable housing units. Two additional grant programs were developed in 2025: a Multi-use Residential Acquisition Program that will provide seed funding to non-profit housing organizations for the purchase of existing rental buildings for affordable housing, and an Affordable Additional Residential Unit grant program to provide financial assistance to property owners who are interested in creating affordable units on their properties.

Impact

- Affordable and co-operative housing units approved or supported:
  - Site Plan approval 85 affordable co-operative housing units
  - $1,177,911 in grants issued to support 7 affordable housing projects totalling 146 affordable housing units



Transitioning from web content to digital services

What We've Done

An updated corporate website (**waterloo.ca**) will launch in December 2025. The site will feature upgraded tools to be as user-friendly and accessible as possible. An AI-supported search function will make it easier for residents to quickly find the information they are looking for. Other upgraded features include a new translation tool, improved feedback mechanisms and better data visualization. Wherever possible, content has been moved out of PDFs and into modern online formats. The updated site went through significant testing with various user groups to make sure it meets their needs.

The new website will also serve as a hub for other digital improvements. Minor services now available online include more bookings (like "Senior Book a Ride") and applications (like "Get help with inclusion support" and to apply for Affordable Housing Grants). It will also integrate with the recently-procured Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software, making more end-to-end digital services possible. Implementation of the CRM project began in September 2025 with the first phase of services launching in 2026.

Impact

- Extensive user research and live testing to ensure that the new **waterloo.ca** is user-focused, accessible and helps get things done online.
  - Updated **waterloo.ca** website meets Ontario Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0, Level AA.
  - 35 new services will come fully online in 2026 through the CRM project, from requesting City pins to applying for road occupancy permits

