

# Starting an outdoor rink



**Great neighbourhoods start with you.**



# Starting an Outdoor Rink



## BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Take a look at our [online map](#) to see if there is an outdoor rink near you.

If there are no outdoor rinks nearby, this handbook can help you bring an outdoor rink to your local park.

## ELIGIBILITY

To be considered for a new outdoor rink, a site must typically meet the following criteria:

- a) Be located in an open space, i.e. in a school or park, that is accessible to the public;
- b) Have an already established path of access for emergency vehicles;
- c) Be large enough to accommodate a standard size outdoor rink (84' x 48');
- d) Have direct access to water via a water hydrant;
- e) Have a relatively flat, level ground, as assessed by staff, for a flat skating surface;
- f) Be greater than 800m (or 15 min) walking distance from any other already established outdoor rink.
- g) Other applicable criteria as determined by city staff.

Potential rink sites that do not have an existing water hydrant but meet all other eligibility criteria may still be eligible for an outdoor rink.

Distance criteria between potential rink sites and already established outdoor rinks will take safety considerations, such as proximity to expressways, arterial roads, active railway lines, watercourses and stormwater management ponds, into consideration.

## PLANNING TIME

June is the best time to start planning a new outdoor rink, so the rink can be ready for fun in the winter of the same year. Timing may depend on the resources available at the selected location. If you're looking for financial and in-kind assistance from the City of Waterloo, please note neighbourhood grants are available up to \$7,500. Learn more at [waterloo.ca/neighbourhoods](http://waterloo.ca/neighbourhoods).

The city's outdoor rink program supports one to three new rinks a year. Requests above and beyond this will be considered the following year. The total number of outdoor rinks that can be established each season is limited based on program budgets and staff resources. It's a good idea to get in touch early!

## COMMUNITY SUPPORT

If you're thinking of an outdoor rink, it's helpful to have the support of as many people as possible in your neighbourhood. You want the rink to be well used and enjoyed once it is built, so the more people you can talk to the better! Consider connecting with your neighbourhood association or any active community groups in your area.

Flyers, social media, posters, community message board notices, and chatting with neighbours on walks, at the park, or other areas around the neighbourhood are great ways to share the idea.

Contact [neighbourhoods@waterloo.ca](mailto:neighbourhoods@waterloo.ca) for support with neighbourhood connections.

Discussions with neighbours and interested volunteers are helpful to get your outdoor rink volunteer team together. You might experience a difference of opinion from residents. We can help you respond to any challenges or questions that may arise.



## VOLUNTEER SUPPORT

Outdoor rinks are volunteer dependent. Each outdoor rink requires support from a minimum of six volunteers, including one convenor who leads the team.

## RINK CONVENOR

This individual is responsible for communicating with the City of Waterloo and distributing information to volunteers and residents regarding the rink. The convenor oversees rink operations, ensuring all tasks are accomplished. This individual maintains an updated list of all volunteers who assist with rink operations and maintenance. Interested rink convenors will be contacted by City of Waterloo staff to discuss the role, and are required to provide two references.



### COMMUNITY TIP

Going out to visit one of the current rink sites during the winter months may be helpful to give you an idea of what the outdoor rink program entails.

## RINK VOLUNTEER

Rink volunteers assist with flooding, snow shoveling, and general rink maintenance with at least one other volunteer team member. The time commitment typically ranges from 2-6 hours per week. Rink volunteers must be 16 years of age or older or 14 years of age and older if accompanied by their parent as a volunteer.

## NEXT STEPS

Once you have the support of neighbours and interest from potential volunteers, the next step is to contact city staff at [waterloorinks@waterloo.ca](mailto:waterloorinks@waterloo.ca) to get started.

Staff will visit the desired location to determine the feasibility of the rink. As mentioned in eligibility, site requirements include access to a program hydrant for flooding, generally flat surface area, and enough space for a regular sized rink.

If the site requires additional work to accommodate the outdoor rink, the rink organizer will be notified to discuss options, which may include applying for grants or fundraising to make the rink possible.

If all site needs are met, city staff will contact the rink organizer to start the process of recruiting and confirming rink volunteers.

City staff will communicate by letter to the residences immediately backing onto the outdoor rink location when a new outdoor rink has been approved for the neighbourhood.



### COMMUNITY TIP

A grand opening is a great way to spread the word about the new rink and to invite skaters and players out to enjoy!



## YOUR FIRST WINTER

All volunteers need to complete some mandatory forms before rink operations begin. City staff will provide details to the convenor in the fall for completion prior to the winter rink season.

New rink convenors will participate in an outdoor rink orientation before the season gets underway. City staff will provide the convenor with the **Operating an Outdoor Rink handbook** to share with all rink volunteers. This handbook contains information on the processes, rules, and guidelines for rink operations and maintenance.

## COSTS

The costs associated with outdoor rinks are minimal given the support provided by the City of Waterloo.

Once the outdoor rink is established, the City of Waterloo provides board set-up and the supplies needed for the rink, including shovels, a hose, storage box, hydrant lock, etc. Any additional equipment, such as shovels, can be donated or purchased/funded by volunteers.

Some neighbourhoods choose to host a grand opening celebration and other winter community events. There are costs associated with these types of events, and the City of Waterloo community grants are a great option. City staff can guide you through the application process and assist you with the planning of your event.

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## HOW TO REACH US



Do you have questions about outdoor rinks?  
Please contact us at [waterloorinks@waterloo.ca](mailto:waterloorinks@waterloo.ca).

Outdoor rink locations and schedules are available at [waterloo.ca/outdoor-rinks](http://waterloo.ca/outdoor-rinks)

*Accessible formats available upon request.*

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