

Using neighbourhood streets and sidewalks for events



Great neighbourhoods start with you.



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NEIGHBOURHOODS WEBSITE

Check out the [neighbourhoods website](#) to find more how-to guides, find your neighbourhood and subscribe to the e-newsletter.

ACCESSIBLE FORMATS

This material is available in alternative accessible format upon request. Please contact us a minimum of 3-5 business days before it is required.

GUIDE VERSION

This guide was last updated November 2025.

About this guide

This how-to guide is designed to help neighbours plan all stages of an event on a street or sidewalk.

Hosting an event on a street or sidewalk can be a great way to bring neighbours together and form connections. If you are planning to use a street or sidewalk for an event, it's important to plan early. Getting a special event permit for a street or sidewalk requires at least 60 days.

If you are looking for more tips for general neighbourhood event planning, such as involving neighbours, sourcing equipment, or following food safety guidelines, check out the [Planning a Neighbourhood Event guide](#).

When to get a special event permit

A special event permit is required for events that impact with the normal flow of traffic or require a full sidewalk or road closure. Examples of events that need a permit:

- Parades, walk-a-thons, or races*
- Festivals or events of any size on a street or sidewalk
- Neighbourhood street parties
- Carnivals
- Horse-drawn carriage or trolley routes
- Demonstrations

*Some sidewalk parades, walk-a-thons, or races do not require a permit if they are not interfering with sidewalk or road traffic flow. Contact neighbourhood@waterloo.ca to discuss your event details further.

Choose a residential street if planning a road closure, as major roadways are not eligible. Dead end streets or streets that have alternate routes around the neighbourhood are good options.



Step 1: Determine event details with neighbours

Hosting an event on a street or sidewalk takes time and planning to ensure a fun and inclusive opportunity for neighbours to participate. Be sure to reach out early to get interested neighbours involved in the planning and excitement.

Step 2: Consider space for the event

- Determine what route or area of the street would be appropriate to use for the desired event.
- Allow for enough space for all participants and event setup.
- One side of the roadway should remain clear at all times of equipment or any event items to allow for emergency access.
- The event closure must be from street to street to assist with emergency vehicle traffic, meaning the closest access point to another road is at the start and end of the route. See an example route in purple in the image below:

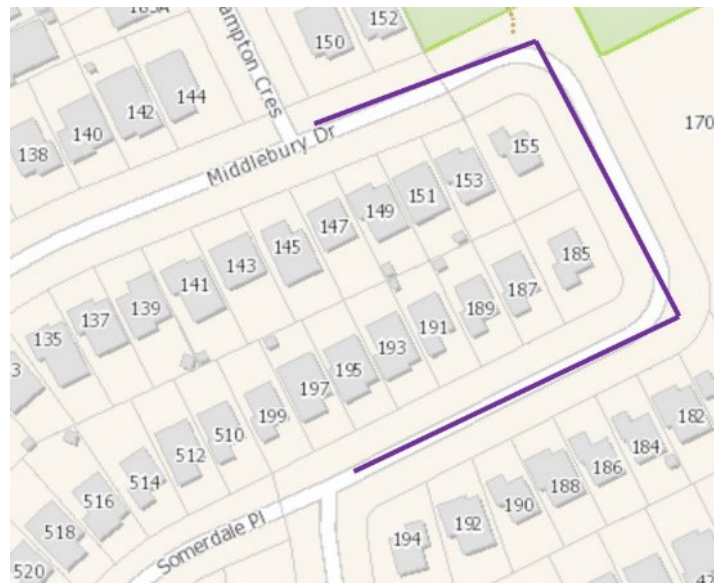
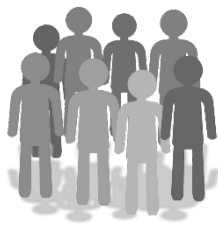


Figure 1: Sample road closure area

Consider asking a neighbour if they would be able to give access to their driveway or connect with landowners for use of a multi-unit building parking lot that can help add to your event space. Knowing all these details well in advance will help you plan for the ideal location and size.



Neighbourhood events vary in size, so it can be hard to plan the number of attendees if this is new to your area. Estimate the scale based on the number of people invited, interest received, and where possible, past event attendance at neighbourhood activities. The [City of Waterloo mapping tool](#) can also help to estimate the number of addresses in your neighbourhood. You can search a street name or select an area on the map to see address points.

Step 3: Costs

Expenses related to hosting an event are the responsibility of organizers to plan. Insurance is required for street parties, which does involve a cost. As noted in the Permit Timelines and Application section (below), the City of Waterloo has a very affordable purchase option.

There are many creative ways to keep costs low and to help make the event happen. There are supports available (such as waived fees) for eligible neighbourhood-led initiatives. For ideas and information about neighbourhood event planning costs, review the [Planning a Neighbourhood Event guide](#) if you haven't already!

Don't forget about neighbourhood grants! The City of Waterloo has funding available from \$50 to \$7,500 for new neighbourhood events and activities. Contact neighbourhoods@waterloo.ca or visit the [neighbourhood funds website](#).



Step 4: Permit timelines and application

The timeline for approval of a special event permit on a street or sidewalk varies based on the location and event details. The time between an application submission and a permit being issued is as follows:

- Events requesting road and/or lane closures require a minimum of 60 days.
- Using only sidewalk or trails require 30 to 60 days.

Step 5: Insurance

Insurance can be purchased through the City of Waterloo for minimal cost or through another insurance provider. Through the city, exact payment is determined by the number

of people anticipated and planned activities, but is typically around \$20. If you choose another insurance provider, the certificate of insurance must be shared with the city and include the City of Waterloo as an additional insured on a minimum coverage of \$2,000,000.

Step 6: Site map

Use a computer, tablet, or hand drawing to make a map of the event layout. Include the road closure start and finish areas, main event equipment set-up spots, and a full lane that will remain clear for access for emergency vehicles.



First time creating a site map? Make your own Google Map and add different icons, boxes, or lines to signify set-up details. Another option is to use a screenshot from any mapping resources, such as Google maps or the [City's map system](#), to get you started. Insert different coloured boxes or lines to represent event areas such as food truck parking, registration tent, band set-up, or other elements. Include labels or a legend to communicate what each coloured area represents. An example of a site map is included below.

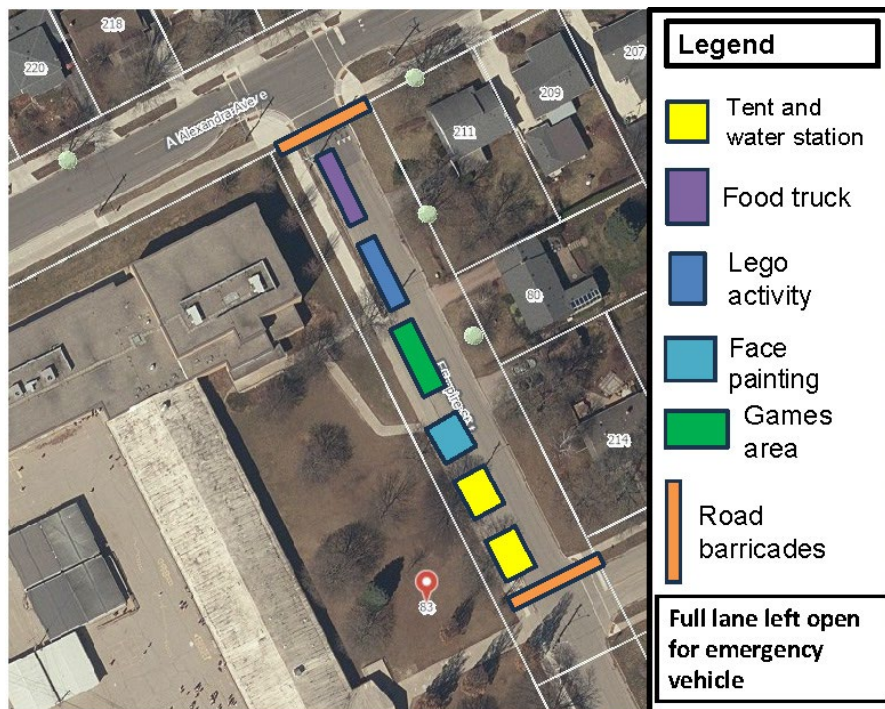


Figure 2: Example site map

Step 7: Application checklist

The following checklist includes all items needed to apply for the road or sidewalk closure:

- Submit the permit application on the [City of Waterloo's website](#). The form includes organizer contact information, the requested road or sidewalk space, and event details including date, time, and activities.
- Submit an insurance certificate to traffic@waterloo.ca.
- Submit a site map to traffic@waterloo.ca.

City staff will connect with applicants if any further details are needed, changes are required, or if there are questions for the organizer. Once all details are submitted, the event organizer will hear from city staff by the permit timelines mentioned at the start of this section.

Step 8: Prepare to use road or sidewalk

Once the permit is approved, the final steps are left!

SPREAD THE NEWS

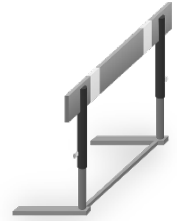
Spread the news about the final event details within the neighbourhood through email, flyers, social media, posters, or community boards. Be sure to include event details, plans for rain or other poor weather conditions, what neighbours should bring (if this applies), and how people can connect with the organizers for questions, to volunteer, or to seek inclusion details. For more information about delivering your event, check out the [Planning an Event webpage](#).

ROAD BARRIERS

As part of the special event permit, City staff will require a residential address to drop-off the road barricades for a road closure event. Consider the proximity to the closure start and finish when securing a location. Connect with neighbours nearby to find out if they are willing to volunteer as a property for drop-off and pick-up. You may also wish to ask neighbours near the start and finish to set up and teardown the barricades. Make sure barricades are stored in a safe and monitored location. Neighbours are responsible to make sure the barricades are returned in good condition.

Barricades can be set up in the middle of the road for the closure. When setting up barricades, make sure sidewalk entry remain open for folks with physical impairments. Barricades are typically dropped off and picked up on the weekday immediately before and after the event by city staff.

When planning event details, consider assigning a volunteer to connect with neighbours at the barriers to the street closure during the event. These individuals can share event details as folks arrive, answer questions from vehicles that approach, and be prepared to move the barrier for any cases of needed emergency access. If your event is a walk or run using sidewalk space, have volunteers stationed at key spots along the route. Similarly, this can help direct participants and support any event questions.



KNOW THE RULES

Special event permits allow neighbours to enjoy their streets and sidewalks in a unique way. A few rules are important to keep in mind when leading or attending this type of event:

- Alcohol is not permitted on a street or sidewalk at any time.
- Vehicles are not permitted to enter or exit the street at any time.
- Decorations add a fun and festive feel to the celebration. On a road, decorations should not be placed on the emergency route nor be affixed to light poles to go across the street when hanging banners, balloons, or other items. The emergency route must remain completely clear.
- Clean up and removal of all items is an important part at the end of the event. Be sure to have volunteers available to help!
- If a food truck(s) is participating in the event, they must have a valid operating license in Waterloo ([search for the business here](#)) and must not interfere with the emergency route.
- Bouncy castles, propane heaters, and anything requiring anchors into the pavement are not permitted in the road or sidewalk area at any time.
- Sewer drains (also called catch basins) are an important part of city infrastructure. Do not put anything in these drains- this includes any liquids or debris. If personal items accidentally fall into the area, please review the [sewer drains and covers information on the city website](#) for assistance and contact details.

Step 9: Final steps

Here are a few items to plan into timelines and mark as reminders leading up to the event:

- Remind impacted neighbours about the closure date, time, and event details through a letter in their mailbox. Consider spreading out this task amongst volunteers.
- When the time comes, remind the neighbour that the road barriers will be delivered to and have them get in touch to confirm their arrival. If your event is on a weekend, they will typically be dropped off on Friday and picked up on Monday.
- If photos will be taken at the event to share with neighbours, prepare signs to post at the event. This allows individuals who wish not to be photographed to identify this requirement with organizers. Reach out to the [neighbourhoods team](#) for a template.

- When planning final event details, always ensure emergency access is maintained in your set-up plans. No decorations, tents, tables, chairs, or equipment should block the emergency route planned.

Step 10: Celebrate with neighbours

Celebrate: A lot of work has gone into the big day and now it's time to celebrate! Welcome attendees, enjoy the fun, and connect with neighbours.

Clean-up: Be sure to leave the street clear when the event is done of all decorations, litter, and event equipment. Return the barriers to the residential address for pick-up.

Feedback: At the event or in the days following, ask neighbours for feedback about the event to help with future planning.