



# DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT MEMO

To: Wauwatosa Common Council

From: Mark Hammond, Development Director

Meeting Date: August 26, 2025

Subject: Waiver of Building Permit Fees for Flood-Related Repairs

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## A. Issue

Recent flooding in Wauwatosa has caused significant damage to homes and businesses. Property owners undertaking repairs or reconstruction are required to obtain building permits. The question before the Council is whether to waive permit fees for this flood-related work in order to ease the financial burden on affected residents and businesses.

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## B. Background/Options

Severe storms on August 9 and 10, 2025 led to widespread flooding across multiple neighborhoods in Wauwatosa. Many residents are now facing unanticipated repair expenses. Under current practice, standard permit fees apply regardless of the cause of damage.

Options available to the Council include:

1. **Maintain current fee requirements** – Property owners would pay normal permit fees.
2. **Waive permit fees for flood-related repairs** – Fees would be waived for a limited period (e.g., 90–180 days) for work directly attributable to flood damage.
3. **Partial reduction of fees** – The City could consider a partial discount or cap on fees for eligible projects.

Several nearby municipalities have waived or reduced fees in similar situations following natural disasters.

For purposes of this fee waiver, “flood-related work” will be defined as repairs, replacements, or reconstruction made necessary due to direct damage from the flooding event of August 9 and 10, 2025. Eligible work includes electrical, plumbing, HVAC, structural, and interior/exterior repairs caused by flood damage. It does not include elective remodels, upgrades, or additions unrelated to flood damage.

The ordinances require we charge a fee but the amount of the fee is established by resolution. So, to set a waiver in place without changing the ordinance, we recommend the Council set the fee amount to \$0.00 for this period of time for flood-related repairs.

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## C. Strategic Plan (Area of Focus)

This action aligns with the City's Strategic Plan focus area of **"Quality of Life and Resiliency"** by supporting residents during a time of hardship. Waiving fees would demonstrate a commitment to community well-being, neighborhood stability, and responsiveness to emergency events. It also supports **"Customer Service Excellence"** by reducing red tape for residents during recovery.

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## D. Fiscal Impact

The fiscal impact of this action is difficult to estimate. However, compared to a baseline scenario in which the flooding had not occurred, the impact to City fee revenue should be largely neutral. In other words, absent the floods, most of this permit activity would not have been initiated, and the associated revenue would not have been collected. Waiving fees therefore avoids placing an additional financial burden on residents without materially reducing expected revenues.

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## E. Recommendation

The Development Department recommends that the Common Council waive permit fees for flood-related repairs for a defined period of 90 days by setting the fee amount to \$0.00 for this period of time. This action will reduce financial stress for affected property owners, accelerate recovery, and demonstrate the City's commitment to supporting residents and businesses during an emergency event.