

## Hamilton, Ohio, to Deploy Real-Time Snowplow Tracker

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(TNS) — HAMILTON, Ohio — It's snowing in Hamilton, and you want to pick up a prescription for your sick child at the closest drug store.

You're thinking, "I wonder whether the snow plows have cleared East Avenue yet?"

In January, Hamilton's city government plans to offer a quick online answer to that, through its new My Hamilton Resident Portal.

By then, the city plans to be using Automatic Vehicle Locator technology that not only provides real-time data on where city vehicles are, but also whether their snow plows are up or down, and whether the salt spreaders are in operation.

That will let the city show on maps the streets that recently have been cleared, said Brandon Saurber, Hamilton's director of Strategy and Information, who recently unveiled the My Hamilton Resident Portal.

While the snow-clearing information is not yet available, most aspects of the portal, which can be viewed from personal computers and smart phones, already are.

"The My Hamilton Resident Portal can simply be summed up as our effort to address some of the most common questions that our residents have of us as a city government," Saurber said.

“We really aim to put as much data as we have available at the fingertips of our residents, from basic city services, such as when the next street-sweeping will happen within their neighborhood through to economic-development and infrastructure projects,” Saurber said.

Other information includes details about special events and information about things that add to people’s quality-of-life, such as parks and public art.

City employees built the portal themselves, using Esri software. With it, residents can type in their home addresses. Up pops the next day of trash pickup; recycling; the next visit by a street sweeper; the dates of leaf collection; the nearest park’ their elementary and middle schools; the name, photo and contact information for their neighborhood police officer; the year their home was built; the home’s square footage; the name of their neighborhood; and information about the neighborhood.

Another part of the portal, called What’s Happening?, lets people search for future events in the city. People can search for events based on whether there will be food or alcohol available; whether there will be music or children’s activities, by cost of the event, and by event type. Churches and other organizations will be able to enter their own events into the system for people to see.

“We envision this being used for everything from festivals to garage sales,” Saurber said. “Soccer or baseball tournament organizers could even submit to show which teams play on what fields at a particular time.”

People curious about a construction project happening nearby can click on the What Are They Doing? area and learn some basics, such as the type project being built, the expected start and completion, and the estimated financial investment. This area also lets people know about traffic detours and what is causing them.

The Explore Hamilton area lets people learn about the city’s sculptures, public murals, hours of museums and galleries, and locations of parks and trails. People will be able to search for things like parks that have playgrounds, splash pads or trails.

There are even unexpected things. For example, if you want to find out the locations of linden trees — or some other species — across Hamilton, which is a Tree City USA, you can do that. The city’s urban arborist, Dave Bienemann, and staff conducted a tree inventory, and the locations of trees are plotted on maps.

As of Friday, Hamilton had 13,204 trees in its urban forest. They are catalogued by their exact locations, Bienemann said.

“We also did the urban forestry story map that’s on the city web site that tells the story of the urban forest,” he said.

“The team that we’ve got that built this, they’re all-stars,” said Saurber, who named Craig Bruner, Larry Rover, and Ken Carrier as the primary creators.

As time goes on, the city plans to increasingly provide spreadsheets and other data they can use to evaluate such things as city spending, in a move toward greater government transparency, officials said.

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