



Multi-Year Accessibility Plans Annual Status Report 2021

The Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville is committed to removing and preventing barriers through sound and effective accessibility planning. To ensuring residents of all ages and abilities can enjoy the same opportunities as they live, work play and invest in our Town.

This annual report describes the progress and measures in 2021 taken by the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville and in implementing the Town's 2020-2025 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.

To request a copy of the report in an alternate format, please contact us at:

Call: 905-640-1910 Ext 2279

Email: hr@townofws.ca

Mail: Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville
ATTN: Human Resources
111 Sandiford Drive
Stouffville, Ontario L4A 0Z8

Accessible Advisory Committee

The Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville *Accessibility Advisory Committee* ("AAC") is a statutory volunteer committee that acts as an advisory body for council. The AAC advises Council on accessibility planning and related standards to prevent and reduce barriers experienced by persons with disability. Makes recommendations to Council on the development and implementation of the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville in areas including but not limited to: Multi-year Accessibility Plan, preparation of accessibility reports, promote accessibility and inclusion and review of site plan application drawings for accessibility.

The AAC continued to meet throughout the pandemic via virtual platform. During meetings, updates are provided to the Committee which may include presentations or discussions regarding accessibility-related matters, led by staff or an external guest. A sampling of initiatives completed by the AAC includes:

- Over the past year the AAC has reviewed seven (7) development applications for accessibility and provided feedback
- Collaborated with the *Main Street Reconstruction Staff Working Group*.
- Continues to remain current with Accessible legislation and best practices by participating in community forums such as the *2021 York Region Accessibility Forum*
- In previous years AAC promoted accessibility and inclusion in the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville through public outreach, education and special events. Due to the public gatherings restrictions community engagement events have been suspended. The committee is looking forward to engaging in public outreach programs in the future when restrictions are lifted.

Information & Communication

Multiple communications initiatives were completed to ensure information is provided in ways that are accessible to people with disabilities. The Town strives to continuously improve accessibility of communication to enhance the quality of service available to the community:

- Town staff has initiated internal audit of accessibility of documents, document updates are in process. WS Library has completed audit of docs that need to be updated. And created accessible template for library board minutes.
- Communications have initiated a project of developing an accessibility guide. The guide will include accessible templates to assist staff in creating accessible documentation.
- Conversion of Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 from Level A to Level AA was completed in consultation with the Accessible Advisory Committee.
- During the pandemic, multiple virtual systems were initiated to help reduce community spread. The transition to virtual platforms produced technological barriers in the community. To assist the community to overcome possible technological barriers the following were completed:
 - The Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library adjusted their service to meet the needs of the community. As many members of the public were unable to book their own vaccinations online, the Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library partnered with community groups to offer a call-in service to assist customers with booking their vaccination appointments

- Assisted community members to print vaccine certificates for those who could not do so themselves, and made them available at no cost, regardless of whether any individual person was able to enter the building.

- Communications implemented *Monsido*, an online website scanning and monitoring platform. It is used to scan all of our digital properties a regular basis. The platform identifies error, issues and recommendations based on WCAG2.0 accessibility standards. Timely action is taken based on the results.
- Hiring of a Digital Communications Coordinator who, under their portfolio, will coordinate all digital accessibility initiatives. This includes overseeing the monitoring of the Town's digital properties and ensuring they are compliant.
- Improvements have been made to the Recreation section of the Town's website. For example: ease of navigation by reducing redundancy, and therefore reducing the number of clicks to find the necessary information. Residents should now be able to find recreation info easily, in three clicks or less (depending where they start).

Training

The Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville is committed to providing training on the Integrated Accessibility Standards and Ontario Human Rights Code to all employees, volunteers and persons who participate in developing Town policies and others who provide goods, services or facilities on behalf of the Town

- On March 25, 2021 Accessible Document creation training was open to all staff. The course was posted online via corporate intranet for quick referral and to allow staff that could not attend course on date of training to access the course.
- Ensure all employees and volunteers continue to complete mandatory Accessibility for Ontarians with Disability Act customer service training that is appropriate for the person's role as soon as possible
- Record and track employee learning and development activities related to AODA and accessibility requirements

Procurement

The Town incorporates accessibility design criteria when procuring or acquiring goods, services or facilities, except where not practicable to do so.

- The Public Library continues to procure content in a variety of formats: including large print, audiobooks, and digital materials.
- Town has procured Accessible business cards
- Procurement policy in process to be updated

Built Environment and Public Spaces

Throughout the past year Town Staff continued maintain and enhance accessibility features to public spaces; to be accessible to all persons.

Customer Service

The Town strives to provide services, programs and facilities for all persons of the community so that the service outcome is the same for all person with disabilities as those without disabilities.

- Customer service has continued to provide a hybrid service approach throughout the pandemic to assist residents that faced technological barriers.
- All employees, volunteers and those providing service to the public have been trained to provides services in a manner that respects the dignity and independence and is sensitive to the individual's needs.
- Continues to receive and respond to feedback and ensure processes are accessible for persons with disabilities.
- Continues to provide timely notice of service disruptions in various accessible platforms
- The Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library has maintained curbside service even after customers were once again able to enter the library. This allows Library to continue providing materials to those customers who are unable to enter the building for health reasons.
- During the pandemic medical health professionals reported anxiety rising and people were feeling isolated, disconnected and confused. To help reduce anxiety in the community and support mental health and well-being the Town pivoted to provide services to the community that can be completed at home:
 - The Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library developed take home activity kits
 - Several virtual programs were offered in light of the mandatory closure of Town Facilities. Programs were selected in a way that there would be something for everyone. Some examples include: Family Game Nights, Preschool/Children's Workshops; Trivia Nights; Various Fitness Programs, etc.

- The Town continues to provide various Adapted and Integrated programs to the community. Programs. Some successful strategies included: reduced ratio programming and partnering with Community Living York South whose mission is supporting people with an intellectual disability to live, learn, work and participate in the community.
- Partnership with able network – programming i.e. cooking (check website)
- Partnership with Able Network – Operating out of Latcham Hall, this community-based program offers inclusive opportunities for young adults with intellectual disabilities, who otherwise wouldn't have local opportunities available to them.

Employment

The Town has developed several employment policies that support equity in our employment practices including: Corporate Accessibility Policy, Return to Work Program, Accommodation in the Workplace Policy, Harassment and Discrimination Free Workplace Policy and Employee Family Assistance Program. To provide employees with barrier-free employment including, recruitment, onboarding, career progression and performance management.

The Town is committed to providing an inclusive community throughout the organization. Over the last year the Town fostered a positive workforce by improving and initiating the following processes:

- Continued to encourage utilization of Town Accommodation Policy if needed
- Offer a return to work process for employees with disabilities
- The ongoing pandemic continues to add pressures and demands on staff. Highlighting the benefit of providing staff with the resources and supports to help them navigate and cope with the ongoing changes. To assist

employees in maintaining mental resiliency through the ever-changing landscape, the Town:

- Launched confidential online Mental Health Tool for staff:
- With multiple tips and tools to improve mental resilience
- Improve mindfulness with guided meditation techniques
- Yoga at work – exercise the mind and body
- Continues to provide employees with 24/7 access to Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) a confidential resource.
- The Town continues to ensure that accessible software is readily available to staff. The Town utilizes Office 365 products that offers accessibility features such as closed captioning via Microsoft Teams, immersive reading and voice activated assistance.

Transportation

The Town continues to strive to remove mobility barriers within the community. Removing mobility barriers impacts community health by improving access to health services, employment and social activities.

Public Transit falls under the jurisdiction of York Region. For info on York Region's Mobility On-Request Paratransit system, please visit the following link - yrt.ca/en/our-services/mobility-on-request-paratransit.aspx

Accessible Taxi

- Ongoing monitoring tariff fees and ensure that licensed owners and operators of taxicabs are prohibited from charging a higher fare or additional fees for persons with disabilities, from charging a fee for storage of mobility aids or assistive devices, ensure that vehicle registration and identification information is on the rear bumper of taxicabs, owners and operators make available vehicle registration

and identification information in accessible formats.

- Continue to encourage taxicab owners to add accessible taxicabs to the community.

The Town continues to maintain walkways and roads to assist in removing mobility barriers for community members with mobility constraints.

- Regular inspection and maintenance of sidewalks are completed to remove mobility barriers (i.e. trip ledges, cracks and sidewalk damage) for community members with mobility constraints
- The Town continues to commit to:
 - Plowing and sanding sidewalks within twenty-four (24) hours after the end of snowfall to remove. Clear sidewalks facilitate ease of traversing for people with walking problems.
 - Snow plowing of roads to ensure accessibility to street parking. This assist in reducing walk distances to access goods/services for quality of life.
- Regular inspection and maintenance of rest areas to allow to community members to easily access rest areas as needed.

Recreation & Facilities

- In several facilities, touchless accessible buttons (work on a 'wave' motion) and touchless water faucets in washrooms have been installed.
- New or improved existing sliding door entrances have been installed at many facilities including 19 On The Park, the Leisure Centre and both of our Arenas. In 2022, we will continue to add accessible features to our buildings to improve the user experience from parking lot to play area.
- We continue to make annual upgrades to playground accessibility in our parks by replacing pea gravel infill with engineered wood fiber to

allow for ease of travel for all users.

In 2020, we changed two parkette playgrounds to wood fiber. In 2021, we transitioned one parkette playground (Waite Cres.) over. And in 2022, we will be changing three playground areas to wood fiber (Vandorf and two in Memorial Park). Two existing playground structures (one in Vandorf Park, one in Memorial Park) are being replaced in 2022 by new structures that offer several accessible components to ensure users of any age and ability can share the same enjoyable experience.

- The entrance to the skating trail at Memorial Park was relocated to the heart of the park to improve accessibility to trail. And to ensure access to future accessible upgrades including but not limited to barrier free washrooms and change area.
- In 2022, a large scale, multi-use scooter track will be designed and built, which will be completely accessible for all residents.
- A robust system includes the introduction of new initiatives and ongoing maintenance of current accessible platforms and equipment. Facility staff continue to inspect and provide preventative maintenance to equipment that eliminates barriers to accessing Town services, including but not limited to:

- Accessible lift assists (Leisure Centre pool and accessible change room and Arena)
- Automatic doors
- Accessible parking lot signage
- Change table, hoist lifts, Aqua wheelchairs
- Wheelchair lifts, Ramps and Elevators