

annual status report

accessibility

2023

multi-year accessibility plan





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i Contact information

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Let Us Know What You Think

The Town welcomes input and feedback. Public input may be submitted to the Town at the contact information seen above.

Our Commitment



The Town of Stouffville is committed to a welcoming and inclusive community where residents and community members of all ages and abilities can enjoy the same opportunities as they live, work, play and invest in our town.

As affirmed by the **Town's Inclusive Statement**, the Town commits to removing barriers and providing equitable experiences to ensure full participation in our community and uphold the vision of a town that is unified and welcoming to all.

This annual report highlights key areas of accomplishments and measures taken in 2023 by the Town in implementing the 2020-2025 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. The list of actions taken is not an exhaustive list, but a sampling of actions taken to provide an accessible and inclusive community.



Land Acknowledgment

The Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville acknowledges this land is the treaty territory of the Williams Nations. It is also the traditional territory of other Anishinaabeg peoples, the Wendat, and the Haudenosaunee. We also recognize the contributions of all Indigenous peoples to this place and commit to a continued dialogue and greater respect for the land we have come to share. This recognition of the contributions and historic importance of Indigenous peoples must also be clearly and overtly connected to our collective commitment to make the promise and the challenge of Truth and Reconciliation real in our community.

Accessibility Advisory Committee



The Town of Stouffville's Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) is a statutory volunteer committee that acts as an advisory body for the Town Council.

Members of the AAC are champions for persons with disabilities in the community by promoting awareness of accessibility and inclusion throughout the community.

Accessibility Advisory Committee

The AAC advises the Council on accessibility planning and related standards to prevent and reduce barriers experienced by persons with disabilities.

The Committee makes recommendations to Council on the development and implementation of the Town of Stouffville in areas including but not limited to: Multi-year Accessibility Plan, preparation of accessibility reports, promoting accessibility and inclusion, and review of development application for accessibility.

The AAC met throughout 2023 via hybrid format (virtual and in person). 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.



Members of the AAC celebrating Red Shirt Day

Pictured left to right: Norman Bresser, Pamela Hope, Councillor Richard Bartley, Jacqueline Hall Fusco
Not pictured: Ramy Mustafa, Amanda Dimilta



The ACC received several presentations and provided feedback on the following key initiatives:

- Reviewed site plan applications and provided recommendations on accessibility relating to the design of public spaces
- Reviewed and endorsed a plan for revitalization of playgrounds and facilities
- Reviewed and endorsed the 2022 Annual Accessibility Status Report



Visit townofws.ca to see upcoming meeting dates and times.

AAC meetings are accessible to members of the public via in person or virtual attendance. Virtual AAC meetings can be **streamed live**. To ensure these meetings are accessible, auto-generated captions with live transcriptions are provided.

Employment



The Town strives to show leadership in accessible recruitment and employment by fostering a positive workforce and promoting diversity at all levels within the organization to reflect the residents we serve.

The Town has several policies to support staff with barrier-free employment throughout the employment process: recruitment, onboarding, career progression and performance management.

Employment

Over the last year the Town continued its dedication to providing an inclusive community throughout the organization by improving and promoting accessible programs for employees.



The Town has:

- Completed a **formal rollout of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion strategic plan** to staff fostering a positive and progressive workforce reflecting the residents we serve and promoting diversity at all levels within the organization.
- Continued to **provide resources** aimed at promoting mental and emotional well-being, to build a workplace community of resilience.
- Developed and implemented **accessible templates** for the creation of frequently used documents such as job postings, job descriptions and corporate administrative policies and procedures.

The Town continues to:

- Welcome applicant's **request for accommodation** related to the protected grounds of the Human Rights Code at any stage of the Town's hiring process, including application, interview, and placement.
- Ensure all employees and successful applicants are **informed of available support and accommodation** if needed.
- Ensure provision of **individualized emergency response plans** remain top of mind during the accommodation process, the Town embedded an emergency plan needs assessment directly into the Town's accommodation process.
- Ensure **the needs of employees with disabilities considered** for performance management, career development, advancement, and redeployment.



Accessibility Training



The Town strives for excellent customer service through ensuring programs, facilities, and services are provided with the same quality and timeline for all community members.

Third parties who provide goods, services, or facilities on behalf of the Town attest to having been provided with the appropriate accessibility awareness training through the procurement process.

Accessibility Training

In 2023, the Town continued to provide refresher training to build an inclusive environment

Training includes but is not limited to:

- **Anti-harassment and discrimination** refresher;
- **Inclusive leadership training** – providing leadership to effectively manage and lead a heterogeneous group of individuals while respecting their uniqueness, using an empathic and bias-free approach;
- **Wellness lunch and learn** to build on staff mental health resiliency;
- **De-escalation training** for front line staff;
- **Improved evacuation training;** identifying locations of safe places for person(s) with accommodation needs to await assistance at multi-level facilities



Information and Communication



The Town strives to continuously improve accessibility of communication to enhance the quality of service available to the community.

To achieve the Town's goal to provide accessible communications to the community it serves, the Town utilizes multiple communication mediums.

Information and Communication

In 2023, our digital initiatives continued to expand, including our accessible websites, virtual meetings, compliancy reviews, and Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) training.



The Town continues to provide accessible communications through the following initiatives:

- **Updated the Town's website to include accessibility features** at each location such as accessible parking, universal washrooms, and more. This enhancement allows community members to be informed about these accessible options before their visit, enabling them to plan more effectively.
- **Council and committee meetings are provided via a hybrid format**, allowing people to participate in the manner most suited to them (virtually or in-person).
- **In 2023, the Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library redesigned and launched an updated website**, which includes new accessibility features (including Userway software) to enhance navigation abilities. The new website improves user experience and removes barriers to ensure that people with disabilities can better access the information they need.
- The Town's dedicated digital accessibility staff continues to work with partners across the organization to **ensure new web content meets or exceeds AODA standards** prior to updating Town's website
- **Regular monitoring of digital AODA compliance** completed with internal audits and remediation of website content to ensure that it meets or exceeds accessibility compliance requirements.
- Continue to **inform the public of availability of accessible materials** and provide accessible formats and communications upon request.
- Provide **process for receiving and responding to feedback via multiple platforms** to allow people to choose the platform best suited to their abilities.
- Continue to **develop appropriate frameworks, tools, guidelines, and training** for Town staff to ensure the Town's website content continues to meet accessibility compliance requirements.
- **Aid staff** in creating accessible documents as required.
- **Regularly review compliance and usability best practices** to identify ways to improve accessibility in information, communications, and technology.



Procurement



The Town of Stouffville is committed to providing equal opportunity and creating a culture of inclusiveness for all community members by providing accessible services and facilities.

Accessibility criteria are key requirements incorporated in the Town's procurement process of goods, services, and facilities.

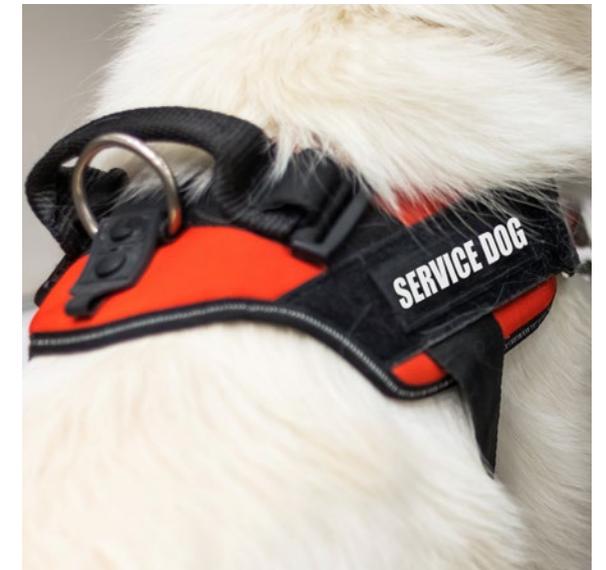
Procurement

Town staff regularly review and update resources and tools for accessible procurement to ensure that current best practices and technologies are considered.

The Procurement Team updated tools and resources to help Town employees meet accessibility obligations in procurement, including procurement training, templates, sample language and guidelines. Some examples include:

Continue collaborating with the York Purchasing Co-operative (YPC) on developing best practices in sourcing accessible services, goods, and facilities.

Accessibility Statement: Vendor acknowledges to uphold the obligations under provincial and federal legislation, including but not limited to: Ontario Human Rights Code, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disability Act, the Occupational Health and Safety Act, the Employment Standards Act and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.



- **Continue to implement accessibility design, criteria and features** when procuring or acquiring goods, services or facilities and documents where it is not possible to do so.
- **Created accessibility checklist/needs analysis** for Town employee to ensure accessibility standards are being met when acquiring goods, services which will be launched early 2024.
- **Continually improving and providing training** for Town Staff regarding accessibility bid requirements.
- **Reviewing the Procurement By-law** with an AODA lens.
- **Updated digital bidding platform with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)** clause for the incoming reports to be remediated as part of the Terms and Conditions (T&C) provided at Request for Quotation (RFQ), Request for Tender and Request for Proposal.

Customer Service



The Town strives for excellent customer service through ensuring programs, facilities, and services are provided with the same quality and timeline for all community members.

All employees, volunteers and those providing service to the public have been trained to provide services in a manner that respects dignity and independence and is sensitive to the individual's needs and abilities.

Customer Service

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan

In 2023, the Town has continued to put the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (“DE&I”) Plan into action. This ensures that services focused on improving the overall ‘inclusive’ approach to the planning and delivery of municipal services.



Financial Barriers

The Town continues to look for additional ways to remove financial barriers to participation in the Town's organized and supported events and programs to ensure equitable access to programs, events, and facilities. Some areas where financial barriers are removed are free membership of the 55+ Club and

museum admittance. The updated policy states that Town events encourage, attract and promote community involvement, participation at little to no cost. The Town continues to monitor programs and events to ensure that they are affordable and accessible for all community members.

The Town continues to:

- **Receive and respond to feedback** and ensure processes are accessible for persons with disabilities.
- **Provide timely notice of service disruptions** in various accessible platforms, when needed.
- Provide various **Adapted and Integrated community programs**, including:
 - **Reduced ratio programs**, such as 1 to 1 support as needed
 - **Inclusion specific** programing
 - **Partner with Community Living York South** whose mission is to support people with disability to live, learn, work, and participate in the community.
 - **Partner with Able Network** – this community-based program offers inclusive opportunities for young adults with intellectual disabilities, who otherwise would not have local opportunities available to them.
- **Continue to offer subsidy support** to reduce financial barriers to participating in recreation and heritage programs.
- **Regularly evaluate Town programs and services** to ensure inclusive equitable participation of community members.



- **Continues to strengthen its partnerships** with the Stouffville Chamber of Commerce and local Stouffville businesses to help expand the spectrum of inclusive, diverse, affordable, and accessible events and programs in Town.
- **Developed a Service Excellence Framework**, endorsed in principle by Council – with input from residents, community groups, and staff. The implementation plan includes service recommendations which focus on opportunities to deliver a consistent and accessible service experience.
- **A new service counter was designed and built with accessibility lens applied.** Tax and Water department service counter provides easy access to customers with mobility aids, including a clear space to approach the service desk counter and useable by an individual sitting in a mobility aid.
- **The Museum developed and implemented an accessibility plan**, specific to this location and service.
- **Provide remote participation opportunities for residents**, supporting vulnerable and isolated seniors and adults who may find it difficult to leave home for extended periods of time.



Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library



The Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library strives to be known as the most innovative, accessible, and inclusive learning environment.

Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library

Below is a sampling of the accessible services offered by the Library.

Curbside Service

The Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library maintains curbside service even after customers were once again able to enter the library. This allows the Library to continue providing materials to those customers who are not able to enter the building (may include mobility ability, reduced exposure to protect family members who are immunocompromised, customer with high-risk health – to reduce exposure, etc.).



New Website

In 2023, the Library launched a new website. The new Website includes a UserWay accessibility access tool offering WCAG 2.1 compliance, as well as an AI-powered accessibility widget that offers a customized site experience for users with print and text disabilities (keyboard navigation, smart contrast, a built-in screen reader, dyslexia-friendly fonts, animation pausing, and more).

The Library continues to:

- **Develop guidelines and training** to help employees create accessible documents.
- **Procure accessible content** including large print, audiobooks, and digital materials.
- **Provide downloadable e-books settings** that can be adjusted to suit personal preferences for text size and typeface.

Digital Content

The Library continues to expand digital content and provides equitable access to recreational equipment such as bikes and sporting equipment.

Adaptive Technology

Offers Adaptive Technology Workstation, including but not limited to:

- **ZoomText:** a screen magnifier (enlarges items on a computer screen up to 36 times their normal size);
- **JAWS:** a screen-reading software that reads aloud the information shown on the screen;
- **Kurweil 1000/Kurweil 3000:** a scanning, reading, writing, and learning software. It works with a flatbed scanner to allow scanned-in text to be converted to speech and read back to the user.



Accessible 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.

Accessible Transportation

Public Transit

Public Transit falls under the authority of the York Region. An accessibility service provided by York Region Public Transit includes York Region's Mobility On-Request Paratransit system, visit **their website** to review services available.

York Region Transit (YRT) proactively assesses innovative technology to provide safe, accessible, and efficient transit service for all. YRT is currently piloting a Pedestrian Warning System on 12 electric buses.

The system uses camera sensors to detect all nearby pedestrians, including those using assistive devices and provides visual alerts to the driver and audible messages to pedestrians. Due to the quiet nature of the electric buses, the warning system will help to enhance pedestrian safety, regardless of ability.



GO Transit

GO Transit connects Stouffville with the rest of the Greater Toronto Area and offers accessible trains, buses, stations, and services. To learn more about the accessible services visit the GO Transit website.



Accessible Taxi's

Through taxicab licensing and renewal process the Town monitors 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.

The Town continues to encourage taxicab owners to add accessible taxicab to the community.

Accessible Walkways

The Town continues to invest and maintain walkways and roads to enhance the mobility, safety, and accessibility of all, by:

- Completing **regular inspection and maintenance of sidewalks**, 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 hours after the end of snowfall to remove. Clear sidewalks facilitate ease of traversing for people with walking problems.
 - In 2023, Stouffville implemented “Track the Town’s snowplow,” an **online portal that allows the community and residents to trace the progress of snowplows in real time**. Snow plowing of roads ensures accessibility to street parking. This assists in reducing walk distances to access goods/ services for quality of life.

Some continuous improvements initiatives started in 2023 includes:

- **Build accessible sidewalks** on Lloyd Street and Edward Street
- **Update the Town’s engineering standards & urban design guidelines**
- Implement the **“Share the Road Program”** education in rural areas
- Continue to **meet annually with York Region Transit** to discuss transit priorities
- **Complete overhead utility relocations** to allow for construction of an unobstructed multi-use path
- **Provide traffic calming features and pedestrian crossings** to improve active transportation safety

- **Open and reconstruct Edward Street** through to Millard for improved access to Main Street

A sampling of York Region accessibility initiatives, in Stouffville includes:

- Fulfill request for accessible pedestrian signals and install APS with all new traffic signals and replacements of existing traffic signals
- Install Tactile working surface indicators at all corners during state of good repair road rehabilitation projects
- York Region installed a pedestrian crossover (PXO) in the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville. The PXOs enhance pedestrian safety and accessibility by providing clear signage, overhead flashing beacons, pedestrian push buttons, tactile plates, crosswalk markings, street lighting and pavement markings that distinguish where drivers must come to a stop.



Windrow Clearing

The Town provides windrow snow clearing service to seniors and physically challenged residents where there is no able-bodied person living in the household at no cost. The snow windrow is the snowbank left across the driveway by the snowplow. For more information regarding this service townofws.ca/windrows.



Built Environment and Public Spaces



The Town is committed to an equitable and inclusive community and continues to incorporate accessibility features in the design of new facilities and the renewal/rehabilitation of existing facility features.

Built Environment and Public Spaces

Designing inclusive spaces means that the amenities and services provided within facilities be accessible to all, regardless of age, physical and cognitive abilities. Throughout the past year, Town Staff maintained and enhanced Town spaces, offering barrier-free access to all community members.



Recreation and Facilities

The Town continues to make progress in improving access to recreation and community programming through accessible facility design and the provision of appropriate programming and equipment for people with all abilities to enjoy.

Accessible public spaces include specific features that make it easier for everyone, including people with disabilities, to use public spaces. The Town continues

to prioritize retrofitting existing built environment barriers at facilities under the Town's management, while also minimizing barriers in all new construction and development projects to ensure compliance with Ontario Building Code and Accessibility for Ontarians with Disability Act. The Town continues to strive to proactively increase the accessibility of our facilities, public spaces, and workspaces.

Built Environment and Public Spaces - continued

The Town provides accessible spaces throughout the community by implementing the following initiatives:

- Renovated the second floor at Town Hall with **accessible workstations and offices**.
- Installed multiple sit and stand desk/tabletops to allow for **multi-functional workspaces to meeting varying ergonomic and accessible needs**
- **Installed new hold open closers** at 6240 Main Street and Stouffville Arena to allow for hands-free freedom of passage.
- **Removed all push accessible buttons and installed wave button sensors at two of our high-traffic buildings** with a plan to complete the balance of our buildings over a three-year term.
- **Replaced and/or repaired the sliding doors at Stouffville Arena and the Stouffville Clippers Sports Complex** for increased functionality and space for ingress/egress.
- **Maintain accessible elements in public spaces** through monitoring and regularly planned preventative maintenance
- **Respond to temporary disruptions** when accessible elements in public spaces are not working order by notifying the public and **prioritizing remediation**.
- **Prioritize and retrofit existing built environment barriers** at recreational trails, outdoor public use eating areas, outdoor play spaces, exterior paths of travel, accessible parking, and facilities.
- The Town continues to make progress in creating **Accessible Design Guidelines** to ensure a consistent approach for the design and development that exceed the minimum standards and therefore to optimize inclusivity and eliminate barriers for individuals with a wide range of disabilities.
- **Ensure that the play facilities and other park amenities are welcoming.** Included accessible features such as swings, accessibility points at multiple parks to ensure that play facilities and other park amenities are welcoming to all persons.
- Town has started construction on an **accessible skate trail** with additional barrier free washrooms and change areas at memorial Park.
- In 2023, the Town unveiled **two playgrounds in Memorial park which provides a safe and inclusive play space for children of all abilities**, ensuring that everyone can enjoy the benefits of play. Made available through aid of funding from Canadian Community Revitalization Fund (CCRF). The new spaces have accessible features, including but not limited to:
 - **Accessible pathways** and routes to and through the place spaces;
 - **Diverse ground-level play components** along an accessible route;
 - **Partially ramped structures** allowing users with mobility challenges access elevated play components;
 - **Play elements with lower-profile accessible stairs** so users with limited mobility can access elevated play components;
 - **Handrails and other mobility aids;**
 - Surfacing that is made of engineered wood **fiber that ensures easy access and mobility;**
 - **Sensory elements**, including sensory play panels.





Town of Stouffville

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