

# THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF VAUGHAN

## CORPORATE POLICY

**POLICY TITLE:**     **ACCESSIBLE CUSTOMER SERVICE**

**POLICY NO.:**       **01.C.02**

<b>Section:</b>	Accessibility		
<b>Effective Date:</b>	February 21, 2024	<b>Date of Last Review:</b>	Click or tap to enter a date.
<b>Approval Authority:</b>	<b>Policy Owner:</b>		
Council	DCM, Corporate Services, City Treasurer & Chief Financial Officer		

### POLICY STATEMENT

The City of Vaughan (the “City”) strives to foster an environment that is accessible, diverse, inclusive and equitable. The City is dedicated to treating everyone with dignity and respect, and is firmly committed to providing equal access to City goods, services and facilities for people with disabilities. This commitment extends to ensuring that City buildings, spaces, information and communications are easily accessible. The City actively identifies and plans to eliminate barriers to accessibility, including attitudinal, systemic and physical barriers.

The City recognizes that the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)* provides guidelines for the development, implementation and enforcement of accessibility standards across all aspects of society. The City of Vaughan must meet the requirements in key areas, including:

- General Requirements (including procurement, training and policy)
- Information and communications
- Customer service
- Employment
- Transportation
- Public spaces

This policy reinforces the City’s recognition of the rights, dignity and independence of people with disabilities within our communities. It strengthens the City’s ability to foster a culture of equity and inclusion that values and includes all residents and employees.

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### **PURPOSE**

The City of Vaughan aims to provide programs and services that meet and exceed the requirements set out in the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (Ontario Regulation 429/07) and the Integrated Accessibility Standards (Ontario Regulation 191/11) under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA), 2005.

The Accessible Customer Service Policy is based on the following:

- respect for the dignity and independence of people with disabilities
- equal opportunity for people with disabilities to access, use and benefit from City spaces, services or programs with the same quality and timeliness that others receive
- service integration in relation to services provided to the broader public, unless alternative ways of providing the service or program are necessary for equal opportunity.

### **SCOPE**

This policy applies to all City employees and Members of Council, appointees, citizen members of committees, contractors and vendors who provide goods, services, or facilities on behalf of the City.

### **LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS**

The City recognizes and commits to its obligations under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) 2005, Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (O.Reg.191/11) and the Ontario Human Rights Code.

### **DEFINITIONS**

- 1. Accessible or Accessibility:** Providing independent, equitable and dignified access to products, devices, information, services, facilities or public spaces for people with disabilities, including, but not limited to, those with visual, auditory, sensory, cognitive and mobility-related disabilities. The concept of accessible design ensures both “direct access” (i.e., unassisted) and “indirect access,” referring to compatibility with a person’s assistive technology.
- 2. Accessible Formats:** Includes, but is not limited to, large print, recorded audio and electronic formats, braille and other formats usable by persons with disabilities.
- 3. Accommodation:** Preventing and removing barriers that may exclude individuals or groups protected by Ontario’s *Human Rights Code* from having equal access. Principles of accommodation include dignity, individualization and inclusion or integration.

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- 4. Accessible Taxicab:** Motor vehicle which can be used for the transportation of passengers unable to board vehicles due to physical disability and for transporting of passengers in wheelchairs or scooters for a fee or other consideration and which has been approved by the City.
- 5. Assistive Devices:** Any tools, equipment, or technology designed or used to help people with disabilities or functional limitations in performing tasks, improving mobility, communicating, or otherwise increasing their overall independence.
- 6. Barrier:** anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of their disability. Examples of barriers include:
  - 6.1. Attitudinal barriers: May result in people with disabilities being treated differently than people without disabilities (e.g., a receptionist who talks to an individual's support person rather than the individual with a disability).
  - 6.2. Information or communications barriers: Arise when a person with a disability cannot easily receive and/or understand information that is available to others (e.g., publications not available in large print, digital, braille or other accessible formats).
  - 6.3. Physical or architectural barriers: Occur in the environment and prevent access for people with disabilities. Examples include narrow doorways, stairs, dim lighting or high glare surfaces.
  - 6.4. Systemic barriers: policies, practices and procedures that result in people with disabilities being treated differently than others or being excluded altogether.
  - 6.5. Technological barriers: Occur when technology or the way it is used does not meet the needs of people with disabilities (e.g., a website that does not support screen reading software).
- 7. City or Employer:** The Corporation of the City of Vaughan.
- 8. Communication Supports:** Includes, but not limited to, captioning, alternative and augmentative communication supports, plain language, sign language interpretation, and other supports that facilitate effective communications.
- 9. Conversion Ready:** Digital information that can be easily converted into an accessible format, providing individuals with an alternative means to access the information, such as braille, large print, etc.
- 10. Disabilities:** "Disability" is defined, per Section 2 of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*, S.O. 2005, c. 11 and the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, R.S.O. 1990, c. H.19, as follows:

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- a. any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device,
- b. a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,
- c. a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,
- d. a mental disorder, or
- e. an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act*, 1997.

**11. Employees:** Any City employee, student, intern, or volunteer.

**12. Member:** A Member of City Council or a person appointed to a Council Committee.

**13. Goods, Services, and Facilities:** The City's delivery of goods, services and programs, all information and communication including verbal, print, audio, video, websites, web applications and web content, and other digital technologies including kiosks, facilities, public spaces and the public realm, but does not include fees, charges, taxes or periodic payments imposed by the City.

**14. Information:** Includes, but not limited to, data, facts and knowledge that exist in any format, including text, audio, digital or images that convey meaning.

**15. Public Spaces:** Spaces accessible to the general public, which may include outdoor recreational trails, beach access routes, public eating areas, outdoor play areas, outdoor paths of travel, accessible parking and service counters.

**16. Service Animal:** An animal assisting a person with a disability, if the animal can be readily identified by visual indicators as one that is being used by the person for reasons relating to the person's disability, or the person can provide documentation from a regulated health professional confirming the person requires the animal due to a disability. Visual indicators may be a vest or harness worn by the service animal.

**17. Support Person:** Another person who accompanies a person with a disability to help with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs or to access goods or services.

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**18. Unconvertible:** Any information or communication is unconvertible if it is not technically feasible to convert the information or communication, or the technology to convert the information or communication is not readily available.

## **POLICY**

This policy outlines guidelines and requirements for ensuring goods and services are accessible and inclusive to all individuals.

### **1. Roles and Responsibilities**

This section of the policy outlines the responsibilities of various roles within the City of Vaughan in relation to accessibility and the provision of inclusive services.

#### **1.1. Members of Council**

- Promote access to City goods, services and facilities for people with disabilities in accordance with the AODA and the *Ontario Human Rights Code*.
- Approve and support this policy.
- Is accountable for ensuring the City's activities are aligned with the principles and requirements outlined in this policy.

#### **1.2. City Manager, Deputy City Managers and Directors**

- Oversee the effective implementation of this policy.
- Ensure all employees and those offering goods, services, or facilities on behalf of the City are aware of and adhere to this policy.
- Allocate sufficient resources for the policy's implementation and maintenance.
- Implement this policy effectively within their respective portfolios and departments.
- Ensure their staff receive adequate accessible customer service training, as applicable.
- Ensure departmental practices align with this policy.
- Ensure that in serving customers who have competing accommodation needs, employees make every effort to accommodate in accordance with the *Ontario Human Rights Code*.

#### **1.3. Managers and Supervisors**

- Make certain their teams are familiar with and follow this policy and its guidelines.
- Address any customer service and accessibility related issues or concerns raised by their team members or customers.
- Promote an inclusive work culture, promoting greater understanding of disability, accessibility and wellness.

**1.4. City Employees**

- Follow the guidelines of this policy in their daily work.
- Complete any mandatory Accessible Customer Service training.
- Report any accessibility related concerns to their supervisor or manager.
- Comply with and maintain familiarity with their rights and responsibilities under this policy.
- Prevent accessibility barriers for people with disabilities by including accessibility considerations in the development of goods, services and facilities.
- Participate in identifying accessibility barriers and planning for their removal, or for mitigation of barriers where necessary.
- Provide a welcoming environment for people with disabilities, including any person with a disability using assistive devices or accompanied by a support person or service animal.
- Communicate with people with disabilities in a manner that considers their disability, as far as possible.
- Provide information and communications in accessible formats upon request, or with communication supports, consulting with the requestor about their preferred format.
- Facilitate the process of receiving and responding to feedback about the manner the City provides goods, services and facilities to people with disabilities, and ensure all feedback processes are accessible to people with disabilities by providing or arranging for accessible formats and communication supports upon request.
- Facilitate requests for accommodation by members of the public and employees with disabilities in a timely manner.

**1.5. Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer**

- Provides accessible customer service training to all employees.
- Ensures necessary resources and supports are in place for facilitating accessibility training.
- Handles any accessibility related complaints or concerns raised by employees.

**1.6. Diversity and Inclusion Officer**

- Develops, implements and reviews the Accessible Customer Service policy.
- Co-ordinates accessible customer service training for all employees.
- Responds to accessibility feedback or complaints from the public.
- Ensures the City is compliant with all relevant legislation.

**1.7. Public and the Accessibility Advisory Committee**

- Provide consultation and feedback on the Accessible Customer Service policy and any related matters.

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- Inform regular review and monitoring of this policy to ensure continuous improvement and alignment with best practices.

## **2. Policies, Practices and Procedures**

- 2.1. Establish and maintain policies, practices and procedures that are consistent with the core principles of accessibility, which include independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity.
- 2.2. Policies will outline the City's commitment to serving people with disabilities and ensure City staff are trained and knowledgeable in providing accessible customer service.

## **3. Personal Assistive Devices**

- 3.1. Reaffirm that all people with disabilities who rely on personal assistive devices and/or technologies are entitled to use their assistive devices to access the City's goods and services.
- 3.2. Make every effort to accommodate personal assistive devices and provide information about any additional assistive devices, services or methods the City offers to facilitate accessibility.

## **4. Communication**

- 4.1. Communicate with individuals with disabilities in a manner that respects their unique needs. City staff will be trained to consider and accommodate different communication styles, such as providing information in alternate formats, using plain language or utilizing communication aids, to ensure effective and accessible communication.

## **5. Service Animals**

- 5.1. Individuals with disabilities are welcome to be accompanied by service animals in areas of City premises that are open to the public.
- 5.2. Comply with relevant laws and regulations regarding the presence of service animals. If a service animal is excluded by law, the City may make alternative arrangements to provide services to the individual with a disability.

## **6. Support Persons**

- 6.1. Permit any individual with disabilities who requires a support person to be accompanied by their support person while accessing the City's goods or services on premises open to the public or third parties.

6.2. Where admission fees are charged, impose no charge for a support person who is accompanying a person with a disability.

## **7. Temporary Disruption**

7.1. Provide notice when facilities, goods or services people with disabilities rely on are temporarily disrupted.

7.2. Notice will include information about the nature of the disruption, its expected duration and any alternative options available to access goods or services.

## **8. Training**

8.1. All staff, volunteers, vendors and individuals who interact with the public or are involved in developing policies and procedures will receive training on accessible customer service. This includes all persons who provide goods, services, and facilities on behalf of the City.

8.2. Training will cover topics outlined in the AODA Customer Service Standard to ensure a consistent and inclusive approach to serving individuals with disabilities.

## **9. Feedback and Complaints**

9.1. Maintain a process for people to provide feedback on how the City provides goods or services to people with disabilities and how the City responds to any feedback and takes action to address complaints.

9.2. Ensure information about the feedback process is readily available to the public.

## **10. Documentation**

10.1. Document in writing policies, practices and procedures for providing accessible customer service.

10.2. Documentation will meet the requirements set out in the AODA Accessibility Standards.

10.3. Upon request, the City will provide customers with access to the documents required under the Customer Service Standard.

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<b>ADMINISTRATION</b>			
<i>Administered by the Office of the City Clerk.</i>			
<b>Review Schedule:</b>	SELECT As required by legislation	<b>Next Review Date:</b>	Click or tap to enter a date.
<b>Related Policy(ies):</b>	Accessibility – 01.C.01		
<b>Related By-Law(s):</b>			
<b>Procedural Document:</b>			
<b>Revision History</b>			
<b>Date:</b>	<b>Description:</b>		
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