

Annual Accessibility Status Report

2023

A photograph of a modern building with a glass facade and a brick tower. The building is set against a clear blue sky. The glass reflects the sky and the surrounding environment. A large, dark blue triangular graphic is overlaid on the left side of the image, partially obscuring the building's facade.

Land Acknowledgement

We respectfully acknowledge that the City of Vaughan is situated in the Territory and Treaty 13 lands of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. We also recognize the traditional territories of the Huron-Wendat and the Haudenosaunee. The City of Vaughan is home to many First Nations, Métis and Inuit people today. As representatives of the people of the City of Vaughan, we are grateful to have the opportunity to work and live in this territory.

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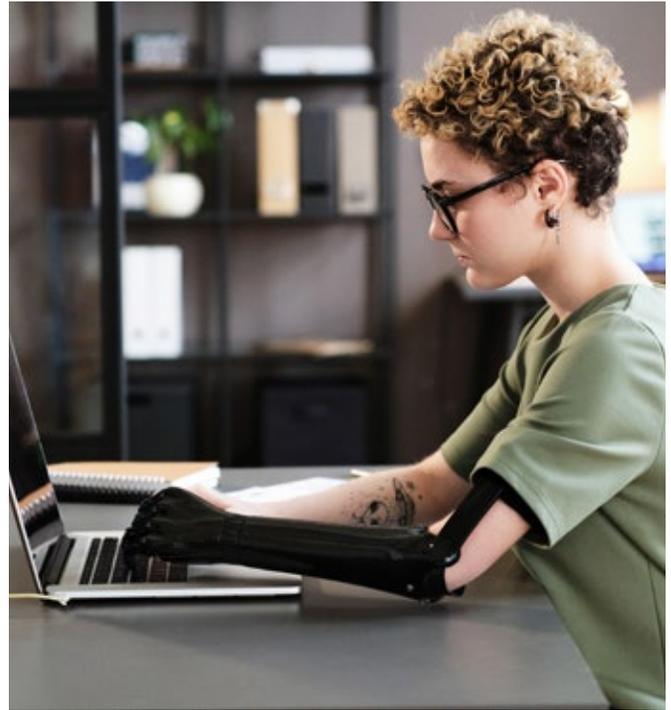
To request an accessible format of this report, contact accessibility@vaughan.ca or Service Vaughan at 905-832-2281 or by TTY at 1-866-543-0545.

Introduction

The City of Vaughan's [2023-2027 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan](#) (MYAP) outlines how the City will create a barrier-free community where there is universal access to programs, services and facilities. Vaughan Council approved the plan on Nov. 14, 2023.

City staff spent the first year of its new MYAP assessing its progress so far and collaborating with members of the community to chart the way forward by engaging in an in-depth community engagement and consultation process. The perspectives of the people who live, work or do business in Vaughan, as well as visitors and guests, are critical for developing the City's future accessibility planning. More than a quarter of the community have diverse disabilities, making their input all the more essential.

The in-depth consultation process involved a closing report on the 2019-2022 MYAP and assessment of the current state, drawing on an in-depth internal auditing and assessment of the City's processes, policies, public spaces and priorities. The past two years also involved planning and rolling out extensive community and internal MYAP consultations. These efforts have helped the City develop a new, forward-looking five-year plan that truly



reflects the inputs, interests and concerns of diverse disability communities and the broader Vaughan community.

Additionally, learnings and opportunities emerging from the 2022-2023 in-depth consultations and engagements can be useful to share across municipalities. The City has shared information and promoted collaboration through its participation in the Municipal Diversity and Inclusion Group, which brings together all regional municipalities and key partners in healthcare, education and community safety.

Accessibility Advisory Committee

The City's Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) is a statutory committee required by the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA). Municipal AACs exist to help guide cities in removing and preventing barriers in policies, practices, programs and services. All of Vaughan's municipal board and committee meetings are posted to a [meeting calendar](#) on the City's website.

Accessibility Advisory Committee Members

Gila Martow, Ward 5 Councillor, Chair
Michelle Goldstein Zaldin, Co-Chair
Michael Nigro
Nazila Isgandarova
Rudy Barell
Nida Khurshid
Noor Din
Paresh Jamnadas



Snapshot of Disability

The 2022 [Canadian Survey on Disability](#) (CSD) by Statistics Canada found that people with disabilities represent 27 per cent of the national population aged 15 years or older, a full five per cent above the rate in the 2017 CSD. That was, in turn, a significant increase over the 2013 CSD. Ontario's population with disabilities is 28 per cent. These figures indicate greater awareness and decreased stigma, as well as reflect the growing proportion of the population developing aging-related conditions or challenges affecting mobility, hearing, vision or cognition.



General Accessibility Accomplishments

A major achievement in 2023 was the successful community engagement opportunities to close out the previous MYAP and develop a new plan based on thorough data and input from diverse stakeholders.

This involved gathering more than 75 individual inputs and consultations from various sources including the AAC, Members of Council, City staff, community members and organizations that work with people with disabilities. The engagement process used various methods like interviews, surveys, focus groups and online tools to gain a better understanding of the vision, priorities and diversities of the disability communities in Vaughan.

The process strengthened the City's relationships with disability communities, and helped grow awareness about existing and new ways of connecting with the City to communicate about accessibility needs or questions.



Better Your Business Tourism Diversity

The City's Better Your Business Tourism Diversity program was completed in 2023. This program ran through the first half of the year and included a seminar to build capacity of local businesses to serve diverse groups, including disability communities. Economic Development is pursuing additional funding to build on this programming.

Policy Updates

The City has developed an Accommodation Policy that applies to all employees and Members of Council. The Disability Management procedure has also been updated in consultation with relevant stakeholders. The City aims to provide programs and services that meet and exceed the requirements set out in the AODA Accessibility Standards for Customer Service. The Accessible Customer Service Policy applies to all City employees, Members of Council, appointees, resident members of committees, contractors and vendors who provide goods, services or facilities on behalf of the City.

The City has updated its policies to demonstrate its commitment to accessibility and inclusion internally and across the communities of Vaughan.



Procurement

The City enhanced its procurement processes and templates, such as bidding documents and contracts, to add clear language outlining accessibility requirements. The revisions strengthen and highlight the accessibility standards vendors, contractors or facilitators working with the City must meet. This emphasizes AODA compliant accessibility features, policies and processes that must be part of evaluations, and ultimately helps ensure City services are accessible to people with diverse disabilities.



Age-Friendly Community Action Plan

The City continued to advance the priorities outlined in the [Age-Friendly Community Action Plan](#) to cultivate Vaughan as a globally recognized age-friendly community. In 2023, the Age-Friendly Vaughan Advisory Committee was launched, providing opportunities for residents to continually consult on City policies and plans through to 2026. Additionally, the City was awarded more than \$50,000 in provincial grants to expand technology access for local older adult clubs and develop relevant programming such as a popular Lunch and Learn series with more than 340 attendees. Developing Vaughan as an age-friendly city is essential to becoming an accessible community where all can grow and age in place.

Information and Communications Accomplishments

The City relaunched vaughan.ca to comply with accessibility guidelines as outlined in the AODA Information and Communications Standards. The organizational website reaches global Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0, Level AA at a minimum, and aims to achieve Level AAA. The redesigned website launched in March 2023 and features a cleaner interface and enhanced accessibility functions, including mandatory captioning for images and a tool that translates the website into more than 50 languages commonly used in York Region.

Connected to the commitment to the AODA Information and Communications Standards, the City is also progressing with the Accessible Information and Communications project. The key objectives of the project include:

1. evaluating accessibility compliance to identify areas of opportunity and establish a baseline for future improvements.
2. developing recommendations and implementation plans to ensure the City has a sustainable framework to meet and exceed the AODA Information and Communications Standards.
3. building staff capacity through training focused on producing inclusive digital content across diverse platforms and formats, while promoting the use of inclusive and plain language guides and best practices.

In addition, the City implemented a streamlined accessibility feedback process. Individuals with disabilities can now provide feedback via accessibility@vaughan.ca, an online [Accessibility Feedback Form](#) and an [accessible fillable PDF form](#) (PDF), in addition to calling Service Vaughan, which has TTY-enabled phone options. The updated [feedback process](#) was launched with the new website in early 2023, showcasing the City's commitment to accessibility and continuous improvement.



Employment Accomplishments

The City established a process to collaborate with staff and their supervisors to create a personalized emergency response plan. If necessary, a department-specific response plan is initiated, including informing supervisors and/or designated personnel of any required precautions during emergencies or evacuations. Disclosure of specific medical details is optional and confidentiality is maintained. The focus is on understanding the assistance staff may need during evacuation without requiring personal medical information.

Project SEARCH

Project SEARCH is an innovative program designed to assist young adults with disabilities in their transition to the workforce.

It's a year-long initiative that transitions participants from school to work, offering practical training and real-world work experience. This initiative was a collaborative effort involving the City, York Catholic District School Board and Community Living York South. The partnership aimed to provide a comprehensive and integrated approach to equipping young adults with disabilities with the necessary tools for workplace success. The program integrated classroom instruction, hands-on job training in various departments at the City and tailored support. Upon the program's completion, eight participants successfully explored various career avenues and secured full-time employment.



Customer Service Accomplishments

Accessible customer service is a key element of the City's commitment to residents and visitors with disabilities. The City added and strengthened lines of communication, including in person, online and telephone, with residents and visitors, as well as updated the Accessible Customer Service Policy.

Recreation Services

The department made significant gains in enhancing accessibility and customer service for people with disabilities. These achievements reflect the department's commitment to inclusivity and providing equal access to services for all residents.



Key accomplishments include:

- 35 per cent increase in inclusive recreation programs
- 30 per cent increase in participation of people with disabilities
- 27 per cent increase in one-on-one support provision in programming

Accessible PDF versions of the recreation programming eGuides and eBrochures are prominently featured on the City's website, including direct links to public communications, eNewsletters and public service announcements to inform the community about the availability of accessible recreation programming guides.

Recreation Services developed and digitized additional training programs to ensure employees are well-equipped to understand and meet the needs of people with disabilities, providing staff with the skills to offer effective, empathetic and inclusive service. Additionally, the department purchased fitness equipment to address the needs of members with disabilities and equipped all community centres with smart boards to enrich program offerings and improve communication for older adults and people with disabilities.



The Vaughan Celebrates program, featuring Winterfest, Concerts in the Park and Canada Day events, provided family-friendly and accessible entertainment, drawing thousands to Vaughan’s outdoor and indoor venues. Accessibility features included designated parking, shuttle services, accessible paths and washrooms, inclusive seating areas, and a special area near the stage for wheelchair users during Canada Day at Boyd Conservation Area. Winterfest expanded its adult programming with tai chi and yoga to cater to adults and seniors.

The City was recognized as a Festival Hub for Ontario Culture Days 2023, organizing 72 free events with a focus on accessibility and inclusion. The events, designed to be inclusive for people with disabilities, were organized in partnership with local groups and offered American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation for stage performances and official ceremonies. Significant achievements included winning the Warrant Garrett Inclusive Programming Award for developing a vibrant social club for youth with intellectual disabilities, as well as partnerships with Variety Village and Ontario Special Olympics. These collaborations enabled individuals with disabilities to demonstrate their athletic skills in accessible sports and fitness activities.

Design of Public Spaces Accomplishments

The City worked with consultants to complete a full Building Accessibility Assessment (BAA) for all buildings it owns and operates. The BAA covered five areas:

- exterior (covering the site, facility premises and public parking lots)
- interior
- washrooms
- emergency systems
- circulation

The review produced reports on 76 sites, documenting the needs and priorities to be considered for future upgrades the City's facilities.



Upgrades were made to several City facilities that increased inclusion and accessible customer service, including:

- redesigning the entrance to City Hall.
- installing automatic door operators at Maple Community Centre.
- adding new Hearing Induction Loop systems at Bathurst Clark Resource Library and Civic Centre Resource Library.
- installing evacuation chairs at four more City facilities, including Woodbridge Library, Vaughan Metropolitan Centre Library, Pierre Berton Resource Library and Maple Community Centre.
- adding accessibility features in the Vellore Village Community Centre washroom facilities.
- adding accessible parking spaces at Al Palladini and Vellore Village community centres, Fire Station 7-5, as well as the recently reopened Garnet A. Williams Community Centre.



Indoor Wayfinding Pilot with Canadian National Institute for the Blind and GoodMaps

The City is embarking on an innovative pilot project aimed at enhancing the indoor navigational experience within City facilities for individuals with vision loss. In 2023, the City developed a new partnership with the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) and GoodMaps to assess the effectiveness of advanced technology solutions in facilitating independent mobility for those with vision-related disabilities.

Using camera-based positioning and image recognition with LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) technology, the GoodMaps mobile app can inform users where to locate key sites of interest, such as meeting rooms, elevators, ramps, accessible entrances, water fountains, changerooms and washrooms, as well as welcome desks and emergency exits, using real-time verbal instruction and step-by-step navigation in much the same way as sighted people read signs.

The pilot launches in 2024 at six City facilities including City Hall, libraries and recreation centres across all wards.



MoveSmart

As part of the Neighbourhood Traffic Calming Plan, a comprehensive review was undertaken of more than 400 existing traffic calming devices to evaluate their compliance with AODA standards. The assessment resulted in valuable recommendations to ensure traffic calming devices are in line with accessibility standards. These recommendations will be integrated into capital and operational program plans for implementation in the coming years.

The City launched the Traffic Control Management and Intelligent Traffic Systems Plan providing a framework to continue upgrading the City's traffic signals. In October 2023, Council endorsed a procurement strategy to acquire an Advanced Traffic Management System with the capabilities for smart technologies and to upgrade the

traffic signal equipment in the field. A traffic control management system will ensure vehicle traffic, cyclists and pedestrians continue to move safely using innovative technologies that will present information to road users efficiently. In the future, staff will focus on leveraging the traffic management system to maximize the efficiency of traffic signal operations. With a traffic control and management system, staff can respond much faster to requests and make changes to traffic control devices remotely.

Some accessibility features being considered in the future are accessible-friendly push buttons with variable audio chirps and video-based pedestrian detection.

Accessible Infrastructure

The City continues to conform with the technical requirements of the AODA Integrated Accessibility Standards as they relate to infrastructure delivery. This means people of all abilities using or interacting with a facility, whether it is an intersection, bus stop or the

interior or exterior of a community building, are considered when designing and implementing infrastructure. For example, in 2023, Garnet A. Williams Community Centre was re-opened following a major renovation. The new community centre showcases design excellence through the redevelopment of spaces that respond to the needs of residents with strong considerations for functionality, accessibility, sustainable design and resident experience. Some key elements include improvements to accessibility of service desks, signage, change rooms and washrooms, automatic doors and tactile floor indicators.

Accelerating Accessibility Coalition

The City became the first municipality to join the [Accelerating Accessibility Coalition](#). This national coalition – based at the Urban Land Institute, University of Toronto – works collaboratively across sectors to promote accessible universal design approaches in housing design and construction.



Summary of Accessibility Advisory Committee Consultations

As a municipality with more than 10,000 residents, the City must consult with the [AAC](#) when updating or building public spaces like recreational trails, outdoor play spaces and exterior paths of travel, or when reviewing traffic calming plans and other urban areas planning decisions that impact people with disabilities.

In 2023, the City recruited new members for the AAC following a new term of Council beginning in November 2022. The new AAC was convened in March 2023 and held seven official meetings during the year. The City informed or consulted with the AAC on the following items:

- onboarding, nomination of executives and sharing the Office of the City Clerk's roles and procedures
- presentation and feedback on the 2022 Annual Accessibility Report
- presentation and consultation on the 2023-2027 MYAP development and the 'What We Heard: The Journey So Far' report on feedback from community consultations
- overview of the York Region MYAP from regional partners
- overview and discussion around North Maple Regional Park (Enabling Works Projects) and the Woodbridge Library renovation
- final draft of the City's 2023-2027 MYAP
- feedback on the new Accessible Customer Service Policy
- redesign and relaunch of the Accessibility Champion Awards
- relaunch of the vaughan.ca website





- setting of 2024 AAC meetings
- consultation on wayfinding pilot with the CNIB and GoodMaps at six City sites
- presentation of the Parks Infrastructure Planning and Development process for review and renovation of playgrounds
- presentation of the Accelerating Accessibility Coalition's work on promoting accessible housing
- discussion of work on addressing abuse of accessible parking with By-law and Compliance, Licensing and Permit Services

Additionally, AAC members were invited to participate in public engagement activities relating to recreation and to the Greenspace Strategic Plan. Committee members will continue to be alerted to relevant community consultations and opportunities to engage with Vaughan and our regional partners on advancing inclusion and accessibility, and raising the voices of disability communities.

What's Next

The City continues to monitor implementation of the 2023-2027 MYAP as required by the AODA and by the City's commitments to all its diverse residents. This effort requires the collaboration of a Technical Advisory Committee representing all departments and helping track progress on all the key activities organized under AODA standards in the [MYAP](#).

These actions include the following main objectives:

- training and enhancing employee knowledge and procurement processes to strengthen accessible customer service
 - ensuring equal access to information for all users and establishing accessibility standards for external meetings
 - improving accessibility in service provision and communication for people with disabilities, and fostering an inclusive and accessible City through regular engagement with people with disabilities
 - developing accommodation processes to foster an inclusive culture from within by providing accessible formats and communication supports for all staff, and expanding employment and co-op opportunities
- advocating for and promoting accessible methods of transportation to provide inclusive options for people with disabilities
 - implementing a comprehensive accessibility improvement plan with regular audits to enhance accessibility of City facilities, while advancing compliance and best practices in wayfinding and signage as sites are constructed or renovated



Connect, Engage and Stay Informed

The MYAP is the result of community, internal, regional and sectoral collaborations that rely on continuous engagement. The City will revisit this plan regularly in the years ahead and provide annual reports to the public that share updates on progress to continue to foster communication, transparency and Service Excellence.

The City is grateful for questions, thoughts and constructive feedback, and encourages residents and visitors to reach out with any input. Contact accessibility@vaughan.ca or Service Vaughan at 905-832-2281 or by TTY at 1-866-543-0545 with any feedback or inquiries, or to request an accessible format of this report.

You can also [subscribe](#) to receive information, email updates and notices of community engagement activities relating to the City's current MYAP.

For more information on the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act (ODA)* and *AODA*, contact:

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[Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility webpage](#)



