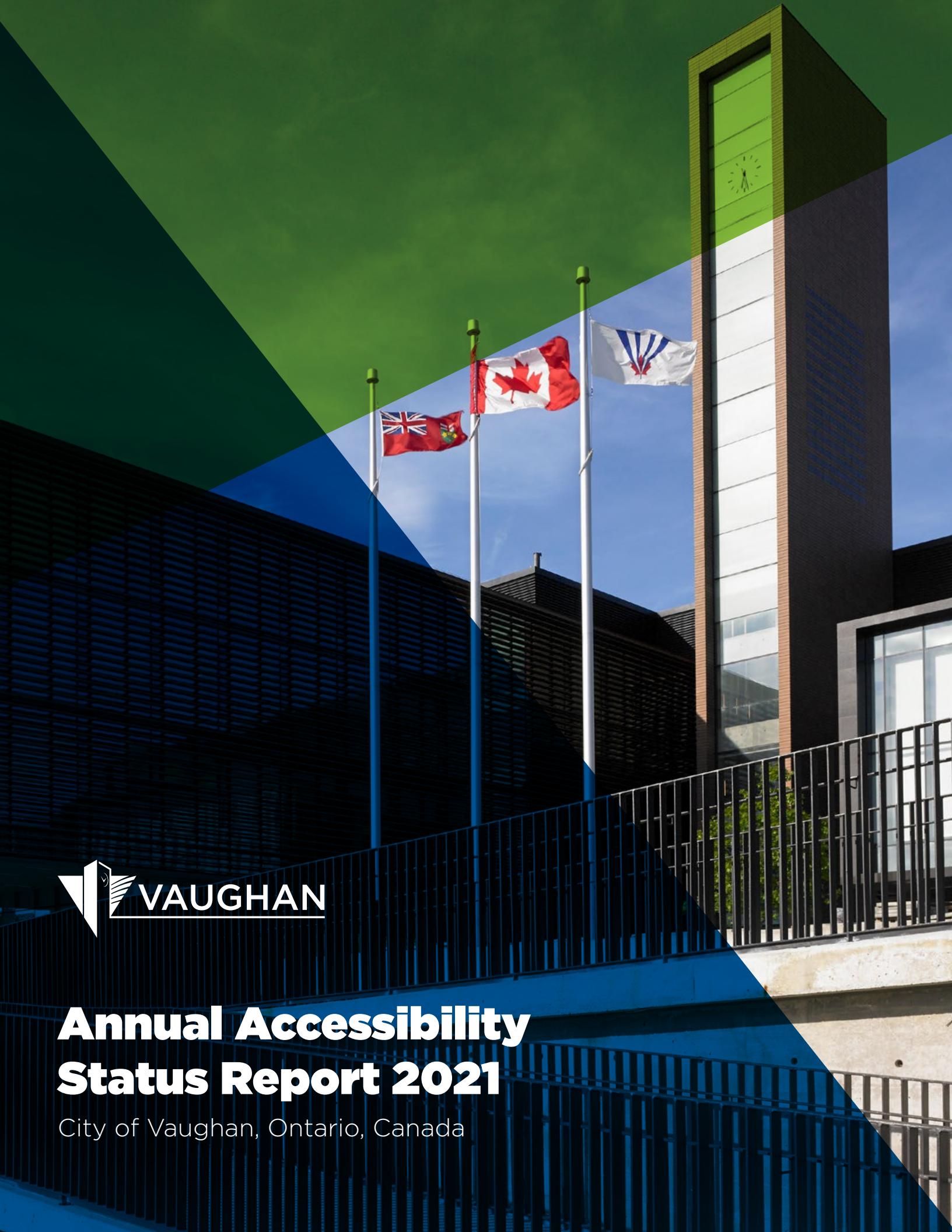




# Annual Accessibility Status Report 2021

City of Vaughan, Ontario, Canada





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# INTRODUCTION

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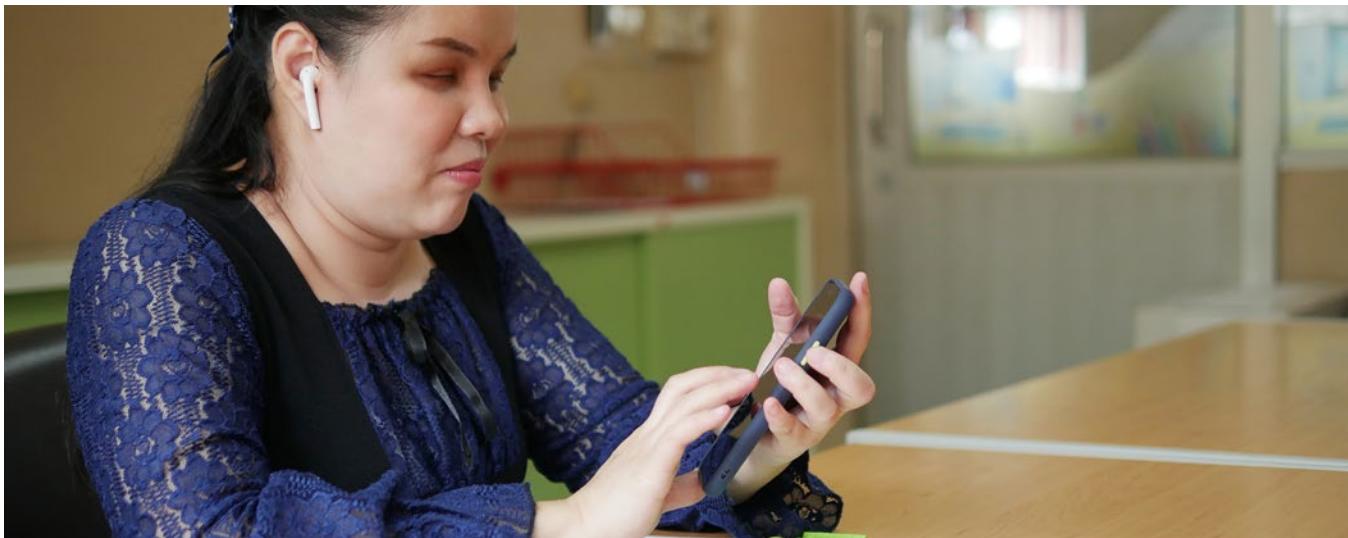
The City of Vaughan is dedicated to fostering an equitable, inclusive and accessible community for all citizens and visitors. As a reflection of this commitment to advancing accessibility, Vaughan Council approved the City's *2019-2022 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan* (MYAP), which identifies how the City will create a barrier-free community with universal access to its programs, services and facilities.

The City's goal is to create an accessible community by 2025. The MYAP outlines the path to achieving that goal and the various activities and initiatives the City will undertake to support accessibility, including implementing new programs and services, creating accessible play spaces, using accessible technology, implementing accessible employment practices and achieving additional Rick Hansen Gold Accessibility Certifications.

## ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Vaughan's Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) was established to help guide the City in removing and preventing barriers in policies, practices, programs and services in a way that meets the requirements of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA). The committee assisted in creating Vaughan's MYAP, and helped to identify accessibility opportunities and challenges within the community. All committee meetings are posted to the City's meeting calendar at [vaughan.ca](http://vaughan.ca).

The inclusivity of citizens with disabilities is a corporate-wide vision shared by Vaughan Council and staff as identified in Vaughan's *2018-2022 Term of Council Service Excellence Strategic Plan*. The City plays an important role in ensuring access for residents with disabilities through the AAC.



## **ACCESSIBILITY CHAMPIONS AWARDS**

Established in 2019 by the City's Accessibility Advisory Committee, the award recognizes businesses and individuals that foster inclusivity and advance accessibility throughout the city. Vaughan Accessibility Champions can be nominated in four categories – as an individual, a small business with fewer than 20 employees, a medium or large business with 20 or more employees, or an individual with a disability.



## **RICK HANSEN FOUNDATION GOLD CERTIFICATION**

In recognition of the City's efforts toward accessibility, the Rick Hansen Foundation has awarded multiple City facilities with Gold Certification for accessibility. They include Vaughan City Hall, Vaughan Fire and Rescue Service firehalls 7-4 and 7-10, Vaughan Civic Centre Resource Library, and the North Thornhill Community Centre and Pleasant Ridge Library as a combined facility. Various accessibility enhancements, such as automatic door openers, tactile walking surface indicators at stair areas and accessible seating, have contributed to reaching this milestone.

The City has received several awards for its accessibility efforts, including the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association Accessibility Award and the David C. Onley Award for Leadership in Accessibility.

The City of Vaughan provides several programs and services for people with disabilities and regularly identifies and creates new opportunities to reflect the community's diverse and growing program needs. Opportunities for persons with disabilities are vast and include the creative arts, health and wellness, life and social skills, performing arts, sports and leadership programs. These accessibility initiatives demonstrate Vaughan's commitment to being a city where people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities thrive.

# COVID-19 RESPONSE

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The City has committed to ensuring that all employees and volunteers receive training related to COVID-19, AODA and accessibility training. In March of 2021, the City of Vaughan partnered with York Region Public Health to operate a mass vaccination clinic at the Maple Community Centre. The City ensured all clinics had:

- wheelchairs available to patrons
- accessible washrooms available for patrons
- COVID-19 screenings available in multiple languages
- interpreters available via a call line for those requiring multi-lingual service
- York Region Public Health nurses to provide in-car vaccines for those unable to exit their vehicle to enter the clinic

The City provided municipal staff from Recreation Services and Vaughan Public Libraries to assist in clinic operations for

non-clinical roles, including check-in, line management, cleaning and disinfecting. Staff assisted in clinic operations from March 2021 to August 2021. At that time, York Region Public Health reduced its footprint within the Maple Community Centre and required fewer staff resources from the City.

The City continued to provide York Region Public Health space for various pop-up clinics throughout 2021 at multiple City of Vaughan facilities. The Maple Community Centre Vaccine Clinic continues to operate. Most recently, in January 2022, Recreation Services has provided assistance with municipal staff for non-clinical roles as the vaccine clinic has ramped up operations and appointments.

For all vaccine clinics operating out of City facilities, the City worked collaboratively to install various ramps to ensure accessible access in and out of the clinic.





# 2019-2022 MULTI-YEAR ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

In 2021, Vaughan Council adopted the 2019-2022 *Multi-Year Accessibility Plan* (MYAP). This four-year plan is organized around the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA) legislation and standards, and was developed with advice from people with disabilities, staff and Vaughan's Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC). Initiatives in the MYAP fall under one of two categories:

The breakdown of the MYAP initiatives by these categories are outlined in the table below.

Area of Focus	Number of Initiatives	Number of Category A Initiatives: Completed	Number of Category B Initiatives: In-Progress	Number of Category B Initiatives: Ongoing
General Accessibility	9	-	-	9
Information and Communication	11	2	4	5
Customer Service	10	2	2	6
Employment	6	1	1	4
Design of Public Spaces	21	1	9	11
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>35</b>



# GENERAL ACCESSIBILITY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

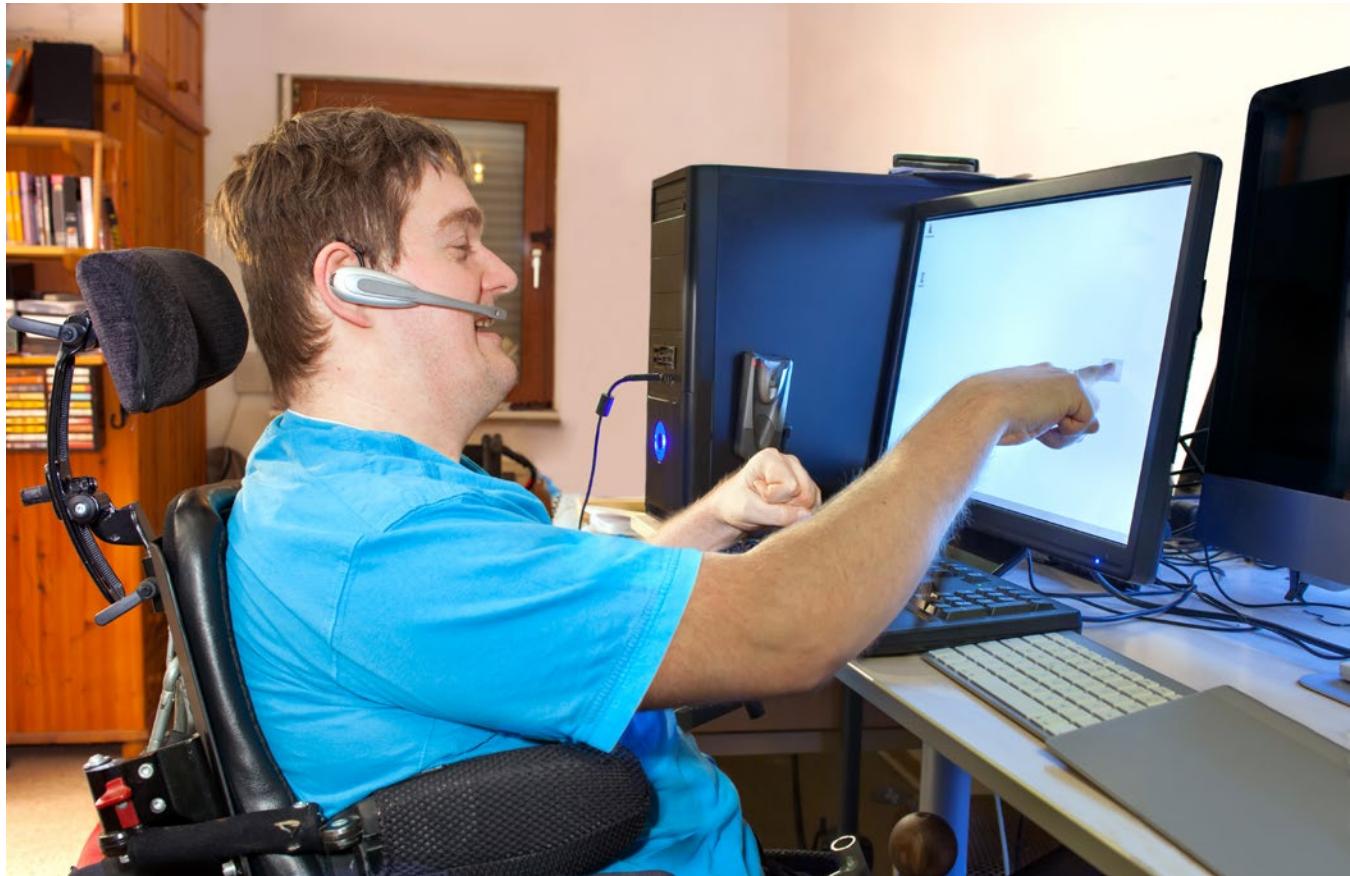
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## GENERAL ACCESSIBILITY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The barriers and obstacles people with disabilities face are more prevalent due to the environment in which they live rather than their disabilities. Obstacles to participation that often stem from the environment can be effectively prevented, reduced or eliminated.

The City of Vaughan's commitment to accessibility strives to achieve the

requirements outlined by the *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation* (IASR) by continuing to develop, implement and maintain policies and best practices. This includes updating policies and practices, enhancing the City's capability to support individuals with disabilities, and training staff on the requirements of the standards referred to in the IASR.



## **STATUS OF GENERAL ACCESSIBILITY INITIATIVES: ONGOING**

### **Initiative #1**

Ensure training opportunities on accessibility awareness are available and communicated to department heads so new and current staff members can attend.

### **Initiative #2**

Continue to ensure recreational program planning initiatives are reviewed with an accessibility lens: by developing detailed work plans to review activities that address AODA requirements which have been implemented in the past.

### **Initiative #3**

Continue to cross-reference existing programs and process with new standards to identify potential gaps.

### **Initiative #4**

Continue to develop suggestions and recommendations through consultation with stakeholder groups when comparing standards with existing programs and procedures.

### **Initiative #5**

Present opportunities to the Accessibility Advisory Committee and seek input regarding the availability of knowledge-related barriers.

### **Initiative #6**

Seek input from staff who require accessible support in case of emergency.

### **Initiative #7**

Provide training to staff regarding the accessibility standards required under the regulation and the Human Rights Code.

### **Initiative #8**

Provide employee support by continuing to maintain compliance with the regulation and improve the ability to communicate with and deliver services to persons with disabilities.

### **Initiative #9**

Continue to document individualized accommodation plans through the Early and Safety Return to Work program.

# INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS ACCOMPLISHMENTS

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## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Information and Communications Standards under the IASR require the City of Vaughan to communicate and provide information in ways accessible to people with disabilities. This includes providing accessible access to public safety information, materials, feedback, communication supports, formats and website content.

The City of Vaughan is continually taking steps to make all new websites and content on those sites comply with World Wide Web Consortium – *Web Content Accessibility Guidelines* (WCAG) 2.0, Level A and Level AA in accordance with the schedule set out in the *AODA Integrated Accessibility Standards*.

The City's Recreation Services department continued to create and implement actions to ensure programs, services and facilities were accessible for everyone. The visual design on all digital platforms continued to be created with accessibility in mind – it is clean, includes images and copy, and is sized to be responsive to each platform. The Recreation Services website (including PDFs) incorporates Vaughan's standard accessibility features. This includes:

- **Alt text** – alternative text used to describe text used, button actions or description of visuals represented in an image/graphic
- **Descriptions** – for images, buttons and fields to elaborate its purpose if further clarification is needed
- **Colour contrast checker** – colour contrast is sufficient and not too faint for those who have vision disabilities or are colour blind
- **Links** – are clearly identifiable by providing another visual cue (underline or bold) for ease of scanning a page
- **Tags** – headings and page content are tagged appropriately (titles, paragraph, etc.), organized and meets coding standards for screen readers
- **Font/text size** – formatted so it is readable and can be enlarged or scaled to user preference

## **STATUS OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS INITIATIVES: COMPLETED**

**Initiative #10** Accessible Events Checklist was created to ensure events are accessible to persons with disabilities.

**Initiative #11** A seasonal eGuide was posted online, which is accessible for people with disabilities. The eGuide operates on HTML 5, which is the standard markup language for presenting content on the web. HTML 5 is responsive (i.e., publication loads and scales proportionately to screen regardless of device or browser). HTML 5 is disability-friendly (i.e., certified by WebAIM as 508 & WCAG 2.0 compliant) – user experience is dependent on browser preferences/settings.

## **STATUS OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS INITIATIVES: IN-PROGRESS**

**Initiative #12** Touchscreen computers are currently being integrated at the front service counter to provide various audio/visual options for further accessibility.

**Initiative #13** Developing language to be inserted in all department communications/ notices. Make public meetings accessible to the public after non-statutory and statutory public meetings by recording audio and/or video, and posting podcasts and videos in a convenient location.

**Initiative #14** Updating fonts and exploring duplicate publication in large print formats and alternative mediums, such as on audio tapes and CDs.

**Initiative #15** Providing alternative formats (Braille, large print) for all public documentation to enable easier access to enable a greater number of visually impaired to access documentation.

## **STATUS OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS INITIATIVES: ONGOING**

**Initiative #16** Enhancing accessibility by striving to update the use of plain language and videos with subtitles on an ongoing basis.

**Initiative #17** Continue to ensure residents have improved access to public information on the City of Vaughan's website by providing alternative formats.

**Initiative #18** Continue to invest in assistive hearing devices to communicate effectively with customers while addressing their needs.

**Initiative #19** Increase community and staff awareness/knowledge through social media and public events – i.e., National Access Awareness Week, International Day of Persons with Disabilities, Canada Day, and Concerts in the Park.

**Initiative #20** Notices to be large print, and may include various font sizes, contrast colours to more effectively communicate with the public.

# CUSTOMER SERVICE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

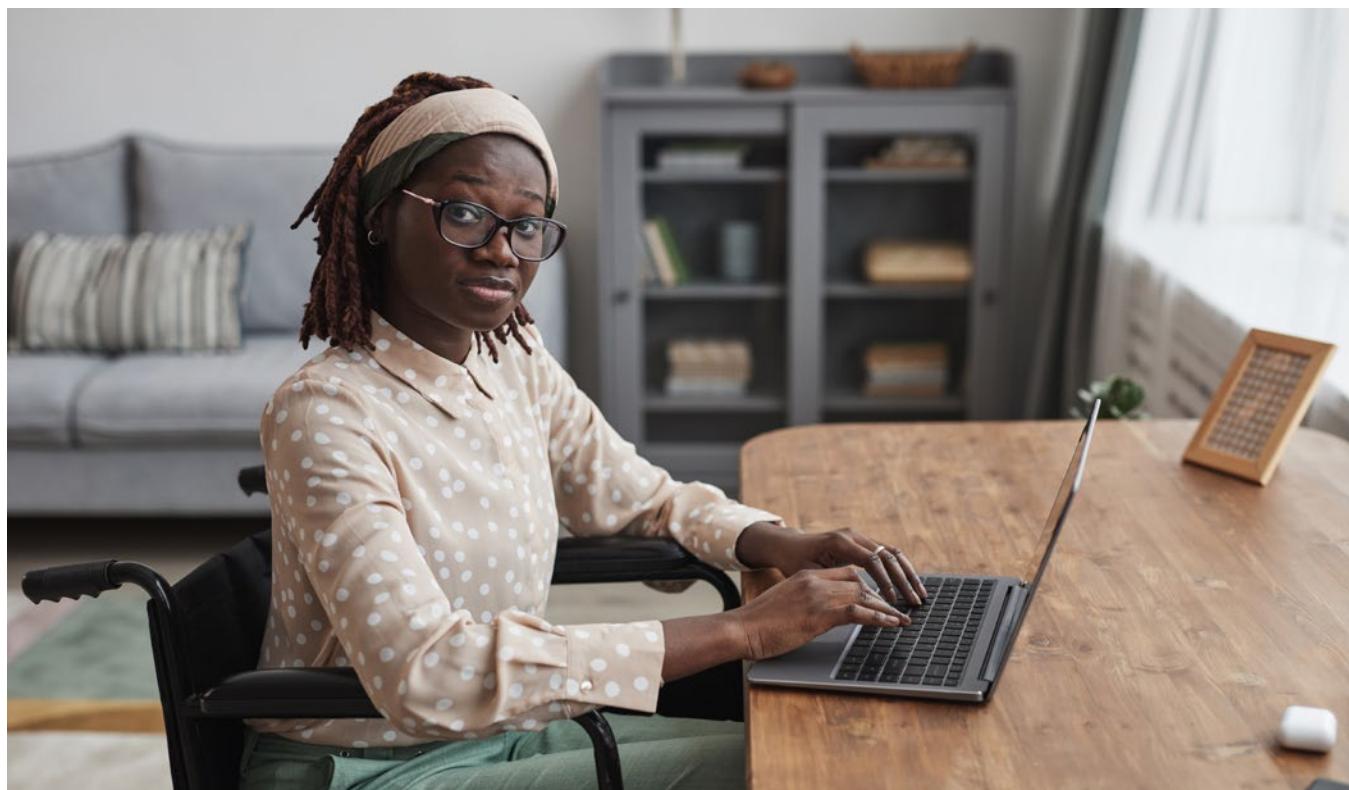
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## CUSTOMER SERVICE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The accessible customer service standard aims to ensure people with disabilities receive equitable customer service among all staff. The City's [Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Policy](#) details specific requirements regarding the provision of goods and services for persons with disabilities. This includes reviewing policies, practices and procedures, training staff, including temporary, contract

and volunteers, and providing information in an alternate format while implementing a [feedback process](#).

The City's *Accessibility Policy* lays down the foundation for accessible customer service. In addition, all divisions maintain specific customer service standards and may also have additional Accessible Customer Services Standards and guides which are unique to their area.



## **STATUS OF CUSTOMER SERVICE INITIATIVES: COMPLETED**

**Initiative #21** Configured the Perfectmind online registration system that provides online and mobile access to individuals with and without disabilities to book recreation programs.

**Initiative #22** Recreation Services developed a Virtual Program Strategy.

## **STATUS OF CUSTOMER SERVICE INITIATIVES: IN-PROGRESS**

**Initiative #23** Implementing best practices of graphic design to increase legibility for individuals with low vision while developing an accessibility promotions plan for communicating library services, audit pages online, and apply improvements to messaging and visibility.

**Initiative #24** Installing priority ranking for customers who call back if they are disconnected to improve the ability of customers with disabilities to have inquiries and problems successfully resolved.

## **STATUS OF CUSTOMER SERVICE INITIATIVES: ONGOING**

**Initiative #25** Recreation Services continues to provide modified services in general programs, aquatics, summer camps and fitness, and supports for persons with disabilities

**Initiative #26** Recreation Services continues to liaise with external service organizations to provide enhanced funding for access and support of persons with disabilities.

**Initiative #27** Strengthen quality assurance protocols and continue to evaluate City programs and services to ensure inclusion and equitable participation of residents and visitors with disabilities in City-operated programs.

**Initiative #28** To ensure success in Service Excellence, Recreation Services continues to incorporate diversity and inclusion considerations that support and promote services for persons with disabilities.

**Initiative #29** Continue to deliver awareness programs through the Fitness division to promote healthy and active lifestyle benefits to improve quality of life for people with disabilities: one-on-one consultation, nutrition counselling, speciality classes (e.g., TEAM fitness program, gentle fitness classes)

**Initiative #30** Continue to assess community needs to enhance recreational opportunities for persons with disabilities in all areas. Seasonal program surveys and community engagement and demographic analysis through Enveronics.

# EMPLOYMENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

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## EMPLOYMENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Employment Standards under the IASR require that the City of Vaughan support the recruitment and accommodation of employees with disabilities. The City of Vaughan considers the accessibility needs of its employees with disabilities and individual accommodation plans. The City of Vaughan remains committed to preventing and removing accessibility barriers pertaining to employment through training programs, recruitment strategies and employment opportunities.

The City's MYAP outlines these initiatives to support legislated obligations under the Employment Standards Regulation.



## **STATUS OF EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVES: COMPLETED**

**Initiative #31** Hired Diversity and Inclusion Officer to enhance diversity, equity and inclusion.

## **STATUS OF EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVES: IN-PROGRESS**

**Initiative #32** Project Search - Employment for Persons with Different Abilities program is in the process of being included as part of the orientation/onboarding program. Pilot Project with York Catholic District School Board (YCDSB) to begin September 2022.



## **STATUS OF EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVES: ONGOING**

**Initiative #33** Provide volunteer opportunities through the Expand Pathways partnership program for youth with disabilities to ensure they gain volunteer/work experiences and independence.

**Initiative #34** Continue to review new employment standards and revise action plan to ensure Human Resources and the Corporation complies with new standards.

**Initiative #35** Continue to review provision of information regarding the availability of accommodation in recruitment.

**Initiative #36** Continue to ensure that performance management processes account for accessibility needs.

# DESIGN OF PUBLIC SPACES ACCOMPLISHMENTS

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## DESIGN OF PUBLIC SPACES ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The City of Vaughan recognizes the diverse needs of all our residents and customers, and will respond by striving to provide services and facilities that are accessible to all. The City of Vaughan is committed to meeting the needs of people with disabilities in a timely manner, and will do so by preventing and removing barriers to accessibility and meeting accessibility requirements under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA).

The *Design of Public Spaces Standards* under the ISAR requires obligated organizations to consult with people with disabilities, accessibility advisory committee members and the public for the following areas: recreational trails, outdoor play spaces, exterior paths of travel, on-street parking spaces.

By making these *Inclusive Design Standards* (IDS) available to all planning, design and development sectors, the City of Vaughan demonstrates its commitment to proactive measures to eliminate and prevent barriers faced by persons with disabilities.

## STATUS OF DESIGN OF PUBLIC SPACES INITIATIVES: COMPLETED

**Initiative #37** The City developed the IDS to ensure the design of products and environments is usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design.

## STATUS OF DESIGN OF PUBLIC SPACES INITIATIVES: IN-PROGRESS

**Initiative #38** Implementing a GPS system on all sidewalk units, city facilities and plow trucks to provide immediate information on the status of snow clearing operations by location to enhance winter maintenance.

**Initiative #39** Option to check materials independently at express checkouts. Incorporated for new library construction. Voice-activated information retrieval.

**Initiative #40** Braille included on directional signage and elevator buttons within the Vaughan Public Libraries facilities while continuing to include on all new signage.

**Initiative #41** Continue to assist with individual's mobility and alleviate physical/emotional stress of staff by improving their ability to work through the implementation of ergonomic keyboards, mouse, chairs, desks, telephones, storage and files.

**Initiative #42** Continue to ensure that physical barriers are removed – i.e., storage, photocopiers, printers, recycling bins – while maintaining minimum aisle widths.

**Initiative #43** Maintaining clear path of travel around boardroom tables and at egress points (i.e., chairs, screens, portable presentation equipment).

**Initiative #44** Include pedestrian countdown timers, audible pedestrian signal features and crosswalk pavement markings at new traffic signals, and retrofit in older areas.

**Initiative #45** Better signage in corridors to increase visual communication and access to reduce directional inquiries. New City Hall has partially addressed this with displays and department signage at counters.

**Initiative #46** Public consultation, in partnership with Facility Management Services, identified accessibility barriers as part of the revitalization projects at Maple, Garnet A. Williams and North Thornhill community centres, as well as gaps and barriers in the delivery of recreational services to persons with disabilities. Reconfiguration of Maple Community Centre recreational space in progress.

## STATUS OF DESIGN OF PUBLIC SPACES INITIATIVES: ONGOING

**Initiative #47** Continue to purchase 17-inch monitors as part of the computer replacement program at Vaughan Public Libraries.

**Initiative #48** Enhancing safety for pedestrians with low vision by continuously updating engineering standards and design criteria to include directional lines at new commercial driveways.

**Initiative #49** Developing new signage and warning signs at trails, walkways, entrances and stormwater management ponds.

**Initiative #50** Continue to increase mobility for people with physical disabilities by continuing to inspect park sidewalks utilizing inspection sheets and schedule repairs under annual contract.

**Initiative #51** Continue to repair/replace sidewalks for safer pedestrian and wheelchair movement.

**Initiative #52** Continue with street sweeping and flushing program on a regular basis for safer pedestrian and wheelchair movement, as well as reduced problems resulting from dust.

**Initiative #53** Repairing potholes in accordance with Ministry of Transportation's regulation for safer pedestrian and wheelchair travel.

**Initiative #54** Continue to apply dust suppressants seasonally and as required to reduce complaints from residents with allergy/respiratory problems.

**Initiative #55** Continue to provide a residential driveway window-clearing program.

**Initiative #56** Identify libraries currently not able to provide barrier-free access to library; seek funding approval for renovation. New libraries to incorporate accessibility standards to continue to ensure new buildings are accessible.

**Initiative #57** *Wet Field Policy* guidelines have been completed to reflect internal procedures for Parks Operations, which notifies Access Vaughan and Parks and Forestry clerical staff of service disruption so they can address inquiries.

# Summary of Consultations

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As a municipality with more than 10,000 residents, the City consults with the Accessibility Advisory Committee to establish, review and update the multi-year accessibility plans and to consult when building new trails and outdoor play spaces. In 2021, the City informed or consulted with the Accessibility Advisory Committee on the following:

- Interim Deputy City Manager, Community Services and Director and Chief Licensing Officer, By-law Compliance, Licensing and Permit Services, provided a presentation entitled “By-law and Compliance”.

- Recipients for the 2021 Accessibility Champion Awards were selected by the committee for the following four (4) categories:
  - Individual
  - Small Business (fewer than 20 employees)
  - Medium/Large Business (20 or more employees)
  - Individual with a disability
- Member’s Resolution from Regional Councillor Linda Jackson, Chair, was provided on Treat Accessibly.

## Next Steps

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As the City approaches the end of the 2019-2022 *Multi-year Accessibility Plan*, the City will be evaluating its progress toward a barrier-free City and developing a new Multi-Year Accessibility Plan for upcoming term of Council 2022-2026.





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