

The City of Woodstock's Annual Status Report of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan



2021

A summary of Woodstock's accomplishments towards inclusion in 2021 and looking ahead to 2022. In compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005.

**Annual Status
Report
Accessibility Plan**

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Background and Purpose

The purpose of this status report is to make the public aware of the City of Woodstock's progress with regards to our 2018-2022 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan to prevent and remove barriers and meet requirements under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA). Consultation with the public was held through a meeting that took place on October 28, 2021 to allow the public to have the opportunity to participate in a review and to provide feedback regarding this Status Report in accordance with Section 4(2) of O. REG 191/11 (*The Integrated Accessibility Standards*). The **City of Woodstock's 2018-2022 Municipal Accessibility Plan** can be found online at:

<https://www.cityofwoodstock.ca/en/resourcesGeneral/PDFs/Clerks/Accessibility/2018-2022-Multi-Year-Accessibility-Plan-Final-accessible.pdf>

The City's Vision and Commitment to Accessibility:

- To promote public awareness and sensitivity towards all persons with disabilities;
- To encourage co-operation between all service and interest groups;
- To identify and document relevant matters and concerns;
- To create a community that provides opportunities for barrier-free access to housing, transportation, education, recreation, health care and employment;
- To embrace the concept of universal design to include both persons with disabilities and the increasing aging population;
- To ensure that policies and practices are maintained in relation to the development and redevelopment of services and facilities that incorporates persons with disabilities and aging population statistics;
- To ensure that the City receives the maximum economic benefits from building an accessible City;
- To encourage public participation and civic engagement in community accessibility matters.

The City of Woodstock is committed to promoting a barrier-free City for employees, citizens and all who live, work, visit, and invest in Woodstock. With regards to the Multi-Year Accessibility plan, the City is proud to present its findings and report on the development of strategies to remove and prevent any and all future barriers for people with disabilities and the aging population.

The Legislation

The Government of Ontario created the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001*, with the aim to ensure accessibility practices were implemented to fully allow individuals to participate in their communities. It required all municipalities to produce an annual accessibility plan, to consult with people with disabilities on the planning, make the plan available publicly, and create an Accessibility Advisory Committee.

In 2005, the Government of Ontario committed to the development of five accessibility standards under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)*. The purpose of AODA is to develop, implement and enforce accessibility standards in order to achieve accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities by the year 2025. These standards outline the identification, removal, and prevention of barriers so that people with disabilities will have more opportunities to participate in everyday life.

The *O.REG 191/11: Integrated Accessibility Standards* regulation is comprised of five (5) standards. This is now law and requirements are being phased in each year:

- ◆ The **Information and Communications Standard** will help Ontario businesses and organizations make their information more accessible.
- ◆ The **Employment Standard** will help Ontario businesses and organizations make accessibility a regular part of their recruitment, hiring and supporting of employees with disabilities.
- ◆ The **Transportation Standard** will make travel more accessible in Ontario.
- ◆ The **Design of Public Spaces Standard** will make it easier for persons with disabilities to move through, use and enjoy our community public spaces.
- ◆ The **Customer Service Standard** will make it easier for persons with disabilities to obtain services, and have their needs met accordingly.

For more information on this legislation, please visit aoda.ca

Highlights of 2021

The list below highlights the planned accessibility action items for 2021 that were outlined in the 2018-2022 Multi-Year Plan. These items are a representation of the City's commitment in striving towards a barrier-free City. If a requirement has been completed in a previous year, it has not been listed here.

Planned Action Items and Status

- ◆ **Remove old play equipment and design new equipment with accessible features in Homer Brown Park:** Installation has been delayed until spring of 2022 as the contractor was having supply chain delays.
- ◆ **Create 6-foot-wide pathways from the city sidewalks to play features in Edgewood Park and Park Row Park tennis courts:** Not completed but looking at inclusion in 2022 budget.
- ◆ **Create 6-foot-wide pathways from the city sidewalks to play features at Hunting Estates and Springbank Park:** Hunting Estates was completed in 2019 and Springbank Park has been delayed until 2022.

Accessibility Improvements Above and Beyond the Original Plan

Accessibility During the COVID-19 Pandemic:

- ◆ City Hall operated at a limited capacity with enhanced sanitization and followed recommended COVID-19 safety measures. Screening for COVID-19 symptoms and recording of visitor information continued until the province moved to Step 3 of the Reopening Ontario Plan.
- ◆ Information about safety measures and City Hall protocols for the public was conveyed using high contrast signage with large font. Information was also available on the City of Woodstock website to ensure access for people who could not access the physical signage.
- ◆ City staff were supported when working remotely. Technology and meeting software such as Zoom allowed for a safe meeting option. Zoom and Microsoft Teams have accessibility features such as closed captioning, adjustable font size, keyboard shortcuts, transcripts, and screen reader support.

- ◆ Council meetings and committee meetings (including the Woodstock Accessibility Advisory Committee) pivoted to an online meeting platform. Full assistance was provided to any member who required training or technical troubleshooting.
- ◆ Para-Transit took measures to ensure COVID-19 safety including screening of passengers; masks, face shields and gloves for drivers; minimized contact with passengers and sanitization between pick-ups.
- ◆ Conventional transit also had enhanced cleaning, hand sanitizers available and protective barriers for drivers.
- ◆ Summer camps were run out of Cowan Park as Goff Hall was used as a mass vaccination site. Cohorts of 15 children were kept separate and safe while shared spaces were cleaned between uses. PPE was used by all staff. Inclusion facilitators were used by children who required assistance integrating into this new format and parents were able to discuss their children's inclusion facilitator needs remotely with the creation of an online form.
- ◆ The art gallery reopened with full visitor screening completed at front desk. Plexiglass barriers were installed around the front counter. Art kits for Family Day and march break were created as a "do it at home" solution to continue inclusion during lockdown. VDI was utilized to allow staff to work remotely and an e-commerce system initiated for classes and purchases at the giftshop.

Art Gallery:

- ◆ Developed audio guides and iPads that include closed captioning and, in some instances, sign language.
- ◆ Drafted and adopted the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy and official statement.
- ◆ Touchless automatic door openers were installed on the 2nd floor and on the single washrooms on the 1st and 3rd floors. Touchless toilets and faucets were installed in washrooms.

Clerks Department:

- ◆ Converted several City documents into accessible formats.
- ◆ Hold open doors installed on main floor to allow open access to the customer service area, meeting rooms and Council Chambers.

- ◆ Main floor swing gate remodeled into full glass doors with an automatic door opener.

Communications and Special Events

- ◆ Converted the What's on Woodstock publication back to an accessible format and ensured availability on the City's website.

Cowan Park Sportsplex:

- ◆ Converted PDFs and non-accessible documents from webpages into accessible formats.

Information Technology:

- ◆ Trained 25 staff members in creating AODA accessible Word and PDF documents.
- ◆ Purchased accessibility tools and scanned the City of Woodstock website for accessibility issues.
- ◆ Created an accessible style guide for web-based information.
- ◆ Received results from a vendor audit of the website and drafted a remediation plan.
- ◆ Created a portal for staff to submit documents in need of remediation.
- ◆ Provided staff with document on best practices for accessibility in social media posts.

Library:

- ◆ Converted documents and webpages into accessible formats.

Parks and Recreation:

- ◆ Added an accessible walkway in William Grey and Broadview Park.
- ◆ Added lights to Pittock Dam crossing.
- ◆ Upgraded Roth Park washroom with accessible features.
- ◆ Sliver trail construction continuing through 2021.
- ◆ Replaced playground with accessible equipment at Broadview Park.

Small Business Enterprise:

- ◆ Ensured website content and educational videos are AODA compliant.

Transit:

- ◆ Added a seventh bus route (South Central) and modified the previous six routes with coverage of the north, south, industrial parks and northern residential areas.
- ◆ Added new bus stop signs that are more visible and identifiable.
- ◆ Added 90 new concrete pads at bus stops to allow for easier boarding.
- ◆ Identified bus stop locations with low light and tested trial solar lights.
- ◆ Uploaded new maps in accessible format to website.
- ◆ Changed the website to be more user-friendly.

Treasury:

- ◆ Ensured website information and documents are AODA compliant.

Looking Ahead to 2022

Art Gallery:

- ◆ Installation of an adult changing table in the 3rd floor family washroom.

Aquatics:

- ◆ Southside Aquatic Centre to undergo renovations that will increase accessibility throughout the facility.

Information Technology:

- ◆ Training key members of each department in creating accessible documents and web content.
- ◆ Remediating the City of Woodstock website.
- ◆ Creation of accessible executive summaries of revenue statements.

Parks and Recreation:

- ◆ Removal of old play equipment and designing new equipment with accessible features at West End/Sudsworth Park.
- ◆ Evaluate trail system to include rest areas and information to provide better access to Burgess Park.

- ◆ Looking at inclusion of 6-foot-wide pathways from the city sidewalks to play features in Edgewood Park and Park Row Park tennis courts in 2022 budget.
- ◆ Completion of adding 6-foot-wide pathways from the city sidewalks to play features at Springbank Park.

Accessibility Feedback Policy

The City has a system for managing, evaluating and taking action on customer feedback regarding the City's delivery of accessible goods or services. Feedback may be provided either:

- ◆ In person at any City of Woodstock facility
- ◆ Via email to accessibility@cityofwoodstock.ca
- ◆ Via telephone at 519-539-2382

All feedback will be investigated, forwarded to the appropriate personnel, responded to, documented and tracked within seven (7) days. Feedback will be accepted in accessible formats and with other communication supports as required.

Continuous Achievement in Accessibility

General:

- ◆ The City has an **Accessibility Advisory Committee (WAAC)** that provides insight on matters regarding the identification, removal and prevention of barriers. The WAAC consists of seven community members, a staff representative and a council representative.
- ◆ All departments inform the Clerk's Department of changes to facilities or services which increase accessibility so that the annual update reports can remain current documents.
- ◆ Evacuation procedures are in place for persons with disabilities at municipal facilities.

Information and Communications:

- ◆ The City can be contacted for access to accessible formats or communication supports.
- ◆ The City provides resources and education to the general public on accessibility issues faced by persons with disabilities.

Employment:

- ◆ The City continues to train all new staff, volunteers, contractors and any other third parties who interact with the public on the City's behalf about the requirements of the *Integrated Accessibility Standards, O.REG 191/11* and the *Customer Service Regulation, 429/07*.
- ◆ We continue to uphold employment equity policies and procedures.

Transportation:

- ◆ The City continues to provide a transit system that respects people's dignity and offers equal service to everyone, including those with a disability.
- ◆ Fare and hours of service parity between the conventional and specialized transit services exist. There is never a charge for Support Persons for persons with disabilities or for storing mobility aids.

Design of Public Spaces:

- ◆ An Accessibility Advisory Committee member is designated as the site plan reviewer to ensure accessibility is considered when reviewing site plan approvals.
- ◆ When planning sidewalks and walkways, the City implements accessibility features such as curb cuts, ramps, grate design and location and grade elevations as per the City's approved Accessibility Technical Guidelines.
- ◆ Designated accessible parking spaces are created at municipal facilities.

Customer Service:

- ◆ The City offers customer service to accommodate persons with disabilities.
- ◆ The City documents all accessibility related policies and makes them available to the public.
- ◆ The City provides proper training/orientation for all persons on the best practices to use when serving persons with disabilities.

Methodologies

Review of Current Activities to Identify Barriers

A review of current activities to identify barriers is ongoing with the goal of creating policies and procedures to prevent future barriers from being created, as well as viewing the identified ones as opportunities for improvement. Barriers will be addressed on an ongoing basis and public feedback is encouraged.

Monitoring Progress and Audit Function

The status report of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan is required on an annual basis and reviewed by the Staff Accessibility Advisory Team prior to the budget preparation cycle each year. The purpose of an annual review of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan is to evaluate whether targets are being met and to adopt a plan to meet current expectations. The Staff Accessibility Advisory Team and the Accessibility Advisory Committee meet in May of each year to discuss the current year's Accessibility Plan and to consider the upcoming year's accessibility capital budget. An annual public meeting must be held involving persons with disabilities to review and collect feedback on the Plan and the annual status report. This includes consultation on services provided by conventional and specialized transit along with Parks & Recreation.

Communication of Plan

The availability of the Multi-Year Municipal Accessibility Plan and any Status Reports are approved by City Council. Additionally, plans and reports are posted on the [City of Woodstock website](#).

Conclusion

The City of Woodstock is committed to continuously addressing accessibility barriers and to being progressive in developing innovative solutions to accessibility matters. We believe in integration and equal opportunity and are committed to treating all people in a way that allows them to maintain their dignity and independence. The City recommends that the Province provides Accessibility Funding to assist municipalities in the implementation of barrier-free services and facilities.

For more information on the City of Woodstock's 2021 Status Report, contact the Deputy City Clerk:

- ◆ By phone 519-539-1291
- ◆ Via email at accessibility@cityofwoodstock.ca