

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



2023

A summary of Woodstock's accomplishments towards inclusion in 2023 and looking ahead to 2024. 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 report on the City of Woodstock's progress with regards to the 2023-2027 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 November 8, 2023, 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 2023-2027 Municipal Accessibility Plan** can be found online at:

<https://www.cityofwoodstock.ca/en/resourcesGeneral/Clerks/2023-2027-Multi-Year-Accessibility-Plan-final.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 transportation, programming, recreation, and other City services;
- To embrace the concept of universal design to include both persons with disabilities and the 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 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 2023

The list below highlights the planned accessibility action items for 2023 that were outlined in the 2023-2027 Multi-Year Plan as well as additional items that were added in the 2022 Status Report. 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

- ◆ **Art Gallery:** This project is waiting for a contribution agreement from the Federal Government. It is expected the items listed below will not be activated until 2024.
 - Renovations to include adult and baby changing tables.
 - Fully accessible gender-neutral bathrooms with additional stability bars and automatic sensors on the doors, toilets, sinks, soap and towel dispensers
 - Touchless automatic doors through the building
 - Fully accessible offices and common spaces (staff kitchen) with light switches and appliances that are wheelchair accessible.
 - Way-finding signage in braille.
- ◆ **Southside Aquatic Centre:**
 - New splash pad – location has been moved to Reeves Community Complex and is being designed by the architects. It is expected to be completed by the summer of 2024.
 - Southside Aquatics Centre outdoor pool is in the design phase with construction planned for 2025. The pool will include new accessibility standards.
- ◆ **Cowan Park Sportsplex:**
 - Installation of accessible sliding doors at Main Entrance - This project received quotes over the approved funds in the capital budget. Additional funds will be requested to complete the project in 2024.
 - Bathroom Renovation - Quotes have been received for the two accessible washrooms located in the main hallway. The project will be carried over into 2024.
 - Facility redevelopment: The RFP for multi-purpose room renovation has closed for the first phase of expansion of the current meeting room to a better high quality programming room with LED lighting, widen doorways and storage - the project is scheduled to be completed March 2024.
- ◆ **Information Technology:**
 - Staff training on documents and website accessibility – ongoing

◆ **Parks and Trails:**

- Play structure improvements - This is ongoing as the Park's Department typically requests capital funding to update one to two playgrounds a year. This year pieces of playground equipment were updated that no longer met the standard at various parks and fresh playground surfacing was added where needed.
- Accessible park furnishings - This project is ongoing as the Park's Department purchases and installs new benches throughout parks and trails each year.
- Trail development - This is ongoing as the Park's Department develops trails on the north side of Pittock to create a loop around the reservoir. This year they are working with developers of multiple subdivisions to design trail systems that will be integrated into these neighbourhoods to provide connectivity to existing trails and recreational lands.
- Homer Brown Park revitalization - The new playground has been installed. The 2024 capital budget request will be for the addition of pathways and a court.
- UTRCA accessible dock - This project is in the planning and quotation stage. Currently, the quote received is over budget and the Parks Department will be working with UTRCA to source a suitable dock within the allotted budget.
- Southside Park main washroom accessibility renovations - complete.

◆ **South Gate Centre**

- Capital Expansion – The project is slated to commence in 2024 as they continue to work with the architect, City engineering department, and vendors.

◆ **Market Centre**

- Renovations – This project commenced in October with completion expected in March 2024. The renovation will include the addition of an accessible elevator at the west end of the building.
- Washroom fixture replacement to incorporate motion activated faucets – this will be completed in March 2024.

◆ **Police Station**

- Building Expansion - The proposal was received from the consultant in late August and is being reviewed.

Accessibility Improvements Above and Beyond the Original Plan

Information Technology:

- ◆ Using Monsido and Axes software, staff have improved accessibility of PDF documents. Monsido gives a PDF compliance Status score as well and the City is currently sitting at 96.82. Over the last two years, 453 PDF documents have been reviewed, majority of which have been remediated. These are the active documents and do not include the reviewed documents that have been removed from the website.
- ◆ The Improved Quality Assurance (Broken links/images, spelling) average for the City's website is above the industry average. The industry average, according to Monsido, is 78.62% and the municipality was initially at approximately 87.2% and has been improved to 98.75%. Examples of these improvements are that 209 broken links, 4 broken images and around 900 potential spelling problems found in April have been reduced to 18 broken links (the majority of these are in old PDF documents) and 1 broken image.
- ◆ Monsido gives the website an accessibility score (errors and warnings), and the City is currently sitting at 95.06% (the industry standard is 88.37%).
- ◆ Ongoing training of staff members in creating AODA-accessible Word and PDF documents.
- ◆ On-going use of an accessibility tool to scan the City of Woodstock website for accessibility issues.

Marketing and Communications

- ◆ A new monitoring software program was purchased that automatically scans the website for errors on a weekly basis allowing staff to identify and correct WCAG violations more quickly.

Transit

- ◆ Continue to annually add/install lit transit shelters and improve accessibility with more concrete bus pads.
- ◆ Work continues to address snow/ice conditions in a timely manner at bus stops throughout the City's route network.

Looking Ahead to 2024

Downtown Revitalization:

- The project slated for 2024 through 2027 is intended to create an intensive and functionally diverse area downtown, serving as a primary business, cultural and administrative center.
- Improvements will focus on the inclusion of accessibility ramps and amenities to increase the accessibility of Museum Square to act as a focus point within the downtown core and host events and festivals.

City Hall:

- 3rd floor renovations which will incorporate accessibility features.

Parks and Trails:

- Paved pathways – locations TBD
- Paving the UTRCA North Shore parking lot
- UTRCA North Shore accessible washroom
- Play structure improvements – Northland Park playground
- Park furnishings – continue with benches along trails
- Trail development – continue building the Silver Trail on the north side of Pittock Reservoir
- Meadow Lane Park – community park with playground and path
- Kinsman Phase 4 Park – community park with playground and path

Aquatics:

- Change rooms and facility expansion

Cowan Park Sportsplex:

- Counter and sink replacements
- Addition of an accessible Spray Pad

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 ext. 2504

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.
- ◆ 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 support.
- ◆ The City provides resources and education to the 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*.
- ◆ The City continues 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 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 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 2023 Status Report, contact us:

- ◆ By phone 519-539-2382 ext. 2504
- ◆ Via email at accessibility@cityofwoodstock.ca