



# East Gwillimbury

## Town of East Gwillimbury Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2023 Annual Status Report

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## INTRODUCTION

The Town of East Gwillimbury is dedicated to ensuring that all legislated obligations under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and the Ontario Human Rights Code are met in a timely manner and that compliance is maintained.

The Town's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP) outlines the Town's goals and initiatives to maintain compliance with the AODA and, through the identification and removal of barriers, improve accessibility for people with disabilities in East Gwillimbury. The MYAP covers the period from 2023 to 2027 and is organized around the AODA standards: general requirements, customer service, information and communications, employment, design of public spaces and the built environment, and transportation. The MYAP also includes initiatives that go beyond the minimum requirements of the AODA and reflect the Town's commitment to creating a barrier-free community.

The 2023 Status Report highlights the key actions taken from January 1 to December 31, 2023, to implement the Town's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. The status report is posted on the Town's website and will be made available in alternative formats upon request. To request this report in an alternate format, please contact [customerservice@eastgwillimbury.ca](mailto:customerservice@eastgwillimbury.ca) or phone 905-478-4282.

## Summary

In 2023, the Town of East Gwillimbury revised the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, which Council endorsed in December 2023. This revised plan was created with input from all departments, the Accessibility Advisory Committee of Council, and input from the public via a six-week public consultation survey which ran in the summer of 2023. During this process, several initiatives were identified that could begin in 2023 and supported through existing budgets. The table below summarizes the status of the MYAP initiatives, and the progress made in the first year of our five-year plan. In 2023, the Town completed or started work on 10 out of the 23 (43.5%) MYAP initiatives.

Standard	# of Initiatives	Initiatives Completed	Initiatives In-progress	Initiatives Pending	% Completed or In-Progress
General Accessibility	3	1	1	1	67%
Customer Service	4	-	2	2	50%
Information and Communications	5	-	1	4	20%
Employment	2	1	1	-	100%
Design of Public Spaces and the Built Environment	6	1	2	3	50%
Transportation	3	-	-	3	0%

## Progress to Date

This section of the report provides an overview of the progress the Town of East Gwillimbury made on each of the accessibility goals and initiatives outlined in the 2023 - 2027 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.

### General Requirements

#### Status of General Requirement Initiatives

##### *Completed*

- Initiative 1.2: Review and update the Town's Accessibility Policy.

##### *In-Progress*

- Initiative 1.3: Formalize process for bringing items to the Accessibility Advisory Committee of Council (AAC) for review and input.

### *Pending*

- Initiative 1.1: Review and update procurement process to include requirements for AODA compliant goods, services, facilities.

### Highlights

To support Initiative 1.2, in 2023 the Town of East Gwillimbury conducted a review and update of its Accessibility Policy. The policy was revised to ensure continued alignment with the AODA and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation. The Town will continue to monitor the effectiveness of this policy and make revisions if and where necessary to ensure ongoing compliance and accessibility for all residents, employees, and patrons of East Gwillimbury.

The Town also completed a preliminary review of the current practice for bringing items to the attention of the Accessibility Advisory Committee of Council (AAC). It was determined that a more formal, structured process that could be followed by any department that had to bring items to the committee for review was necessary. This work, which supports initiative 1.3 will continue throughout 2024 and more updates will be provided in future reports.

## Customer Service

### Status of Customer Service Initiatives

#### *In-Progress*

- Initiative 2.2: Review and update the Town's Accessible Customer Service policy.
- Initiative 2.4: Investigate opportunities to offer more recreation programs for persons with disabilities.

#### *Pending*

- Initiative 2.1: Review, and where necessary, make improvements to the Town's Notice of Temporary Disruption process.
- Initiative 2.3: Formalize and communicate the Town's process for responding to feedback.

### Highlights

Supporting initiative 2.2, the Town has initiated a review of the Accessible Customer Service policy, which outlines the standards and practices for providing goods and services to people with disabilities. The Town is preparing a revised draft of the policy for internal review and consultation with stakeholders, including the Accessibility Advisory Committee. The draft will ensure continued alignment with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and

its regulations, as well as the Town's commitment to inclusion and diversity. The Town aims to finalize and implement the updated policy by the end of 2024.

The Town continues to invest in the professional development of its staff to ensure they are equipped with the skills and knowledge to provide inclusive and accessible programs and services to the community. In 2023, the Town provided Behaviour Management Systems training to its Inclusion Facilitators, Camp Supervisors and Directors, and Recreation Coordinators. This training helps staff to manage challenging behaviors and create a positive environment for participants with diverse needs. The Town plans to recertify its staff every two years to maintain their certification.

In addition, the Town is exploring ways to expand its 1:1 support for participants with disabilities across all programs and not just camps. Currently, the Town offers 1:1 support on a case-by-case basis depending on staff availability and program suitability. However, the Town recognizes the need to provide more consistent and reliable support for participants who require individualized assistance to participate fully in the Town's programs. Therefore, the Town is developing a plan to hire and train specific part-time staff who can provide 1:1 support throughout the year.

This work supports initiative 2.4 and is ongoing. The Town will continue to provide regular updates in future status reports.

## Information and Communications

### Status of Information and Communications Initiatives

#### *In-Progress*

- Initiative 3.1: Create a corporate procedure for the creation of accessible documents.
- Initiative 3.2: Create a corporate procedure for accessible web content that will include the process involved to effectively audit and maintain Town websites to ensure accessibility requirements are met.
- Initiative 3.4: Perform regularly scheduled audits and maintenance of the eastgwillimbury.ca and advantageeg.ca websites and their content to ensure continued compliance with the AODA and Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG).

#### *Pending*

- Initiative 3.3: Enhance AODA training for website content managers and social media content creators.
- Initiative 3.5: Review and update the Town's process for responding to requests for alternative formats.

## Highlights

One of the Town's priorities is to ensure that all its information and communications are accessible to people with disabilities. To achieve this goal, the Town is currently developing a procedure for the creation of accessible content in various formats and platforms. This procedure will apply to both public facing and employee related documents and include social media and website content. The procedure will outline the best practices and standards for creating, converting, and testing accessible content, as well as the roles and responsibilities of content managers and creators. This work supports initiatives 3.1 and 3.2 of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, which aim to improve the accessibility of the Town's digital presence and provide accessible formats and communication supports upon request.

As part of initiative 3.4, the Town of East Gwillimbury conducted a review of all PDF documents on the eastgwillimbury.ca website to ensure continued compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). As part of this initiative, the Town is developing a comprehensive plan to update any necessary documents to meet current PDF/UA and WCAG standards and be AODA compliant. The Town will also express a preference for using HTML instead of PDFs on its websites. The Town will continue to work on improvements to this process throughout the term of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP) and will provide further updates when available.

## Employment

### Status of Employment Initiatives

#### *Completed*

- Initiative 4.1: Update and provide AODA related training to staff, Members of Council, and volunteers, as required.

#### *In-Progress*

- Initiative 4.2: Review and update accommodation and return-to-work policies and procedures to ensure they reflect legislation and best practices.

## Highlights

In 2023 the Town updated their AODA training program for all staff, council members and volunteers. The new training program meets AODA requirements and standards, as well as the Ontario Human Rights Code. The training program covers topics such as an introduction to the AODA, its standards and the Ontario Human Rights Code, types and levels of disabilities, the barriers that people with disabilities may face, and how to communicate and interact with people with different disabilities. The training program is delivered online through a learning

management system, which allows for ease of access, flexibility, and accurate record keeping. The training program includes knowledge checks and quizzes to ensure that the learners understand and retain the key concepts and skills. The training program is mandatory for all staff, council members and volunteers. The training program is an important step in ensuring that the Town is compliant with the AODA and its standards, and that we foster a culture of accessibility and inclusion for everyone.

In 2023, work began on initiative 4.2 when the Town initiated a review of its workplace accommodation and return-to-work policies to ensure they reflect current legislation and best practices. The review involves consulting with internal and external stakeholders, conducting research and benchmarking, and identifying gaps and areas for improvement. The review will continue into 2024, and the Town hopes to have updated policies in place by the end of 2024. The updated policies and procedures will support the Town's efforts to provide a safe, healthy, and accessible work environment for all employees.

## Design of Public Spaces and the Built Environment

### Status of Design of Public Spaces and the Built Environment Initiatives

#### *Completed*

- Initiative 5.1: Continue to ensure new or redeveloped public spaces comply with AODA and accessible design standards.

#### *In-Progress*

- Initiative 5.3: Provide Council with a multi-year improvement plan to make Town trails meet or exceed current standards where feasible. The plan will be based on an accessibility audit and will prioritize the Town's most heavily used trails.
- Initiative 5.6: Integrate accessibility features into new parks and playground structures.

#### *Pending*

- Initiative 5.2: Provide Council with a multi-year facility improvement plan to make Town facilities meet or exceed current standards where feasible. The plan will be based on an accessibility audit of Town facilities which prioritizes facilities with the most public access.
- Initiative 5.4: Improve access to accessible washrooms near outdoor amenities such as sports fields, playgrounds, etc.



- Initiative 5.5: Review the Town's event spaces and practices to identify areas of improvement related to accessibility and the removal of barriers for those in attendance.

### Highlights

Initiative 5.1, though marked complete, is a commitment that is ongoing, and the Town will continue to comply with the AODA and the Ontario Building Code for any future public space projects.

Though not part of an official trail audit, the Town reviewed trail signage in 2023 as part of the Active Transportation and Trails Masterplan update. As part of this project, the Town has updated trail head signage which integrates AODA's Accessibility Standards. The new signs will feature clear and legible fonts, high tonal contrast with backgrounds, and information about the trail characteristics, such as length, surface type, grade, and amenities. The updated signs support initiative 5.3 and will help people with disabilities to plan and enjoy their trail experience safely and comfortably.

As part of the 2023 capital budget, an external consultant was hired to evaluate all Town playgrounds for compliance with the AODA and CSA Standard Z614-20 Childrens Playground Equipment and Surfacing, specifically Annex H which sets guidelines for accessible play structures. The Town scored very well, and all playgrounds installed within the last 5 years meet the Annex H guidelines laid out in the CSA playground manual. Based on the data collected from the consultant, the Town has updated its 10-year capital plan to prioritize the replacement or redevelopment of older playgrounds to ensure they meet or exceed accessibility standards.

The Town is also working on improving the consultation process for new and redeveloped playgrounds. This consists of two parts, the first is standardizing the process for reviewing plans with the Accessibility Advisory Committee and the second is improving the public consultation plan. As part of the public consultation, the Town has always provided door hangers to residents within a 300m radius of the new or redeveloped playgrounds to ensure we receive public feedback and if there are any specific needs from the neighbourhood related to accessibility. After consultation with the Accessibility Advisory Committee, the Town is increasing this to a 500m radius.

The Town also has a mandatory requirement in all request for proposal documents (RFP's) to ensure accessibility is at the forefront of the design and is scored accordingly by the RFP review committee. We request the proponent include an Annex H chart and detailed list of each component as it relates to accessibility to ensure compliance.

## Transportation

### Status of Transportation Initiatives

#### *Pending*

- Initiative 6.1: Review and, where necessary, update Taxi Licensing by-law to ensure it reflects current AODA requirements.
- Initiative 6.2: Communicate and promote accessible transit options in East Gwillimbury.
- Initiative 6.3: Where possible, liaise with York Region Transit to improve accessible transit within and around East Gwillimbury.

## Conclusion

The 2023 Status Report of the East Gwillimbury Multi-Year Accessibility Plan provides an overview of the progress made in implementing the initiatives outlined in the Plan. The report highlights the achievements and challenges of each department in meeting the accessibility standards under the AODA and enhancing the accessibility of programs, services, and facilities for people with disabilities. The report also identifies the areas of focus and improvement for the upcoming years of the Plan.

The Town is committed to building a more accessible and inclusive community for all residents, visitors, and staff. We are proud of the work we have done so far, and we look forward to continuing our efforts to remove barriers and create opportunities for people with disabilities. We thank the members of the Accessibility Advisory Committee, the Accessibility Working Group, and the public for their valuable input and feedback on the Plan and its implementation. Together, we can make East Gwillimbury a place where everyone can participate fully and enjoy the quality of life they deserve.

To request a copy of this report in an alternative format or to send us your comments or questions, please contact [customerservice@eastgwillimbury.ca](mailto:customerservice@eastgwillimbury.ca) or phone us at 905-478-4282.