

Annual Accessibility Status Report 2020

City of Vaughan, Ontario, Canada



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INTRODUCTION

The barriers and obstacles people with disabilities face are more prevalent due to the environment in which they live in rather than their impairment. These barriers can be prevented, reduced or eliminated.

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 a vital role in ensuring access for residents with disabilities through Vaughan's Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC). The role of the AAC is to advise Council to support the City's work in identifying and

removing barriers to lay the foundation for a barrier-free, inclusive community.

The City of Vaughan provides a number of programs and services for people with disabilities and regularly identifies and creates new opportunities to reflect the diverse and growing program needs of the community. 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. The accessibility initiatives outlined demonstrate Vaughan's commitment to being a city where people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities can thrive.





COVID-19 RESPONSE

The COVID-19 global pandemic significantly altered the way the City provided service. COVID-19 causes a respiratory (lungs) type infection that is mild in most of the population (approximately 80%) but can be more severe in those who are older adults or those with chronic underlying conditions. The City recognized that persons with disabilities remained at an increased risk of experiencing detrimental impacts from the virus. Having a disability alone may not put people living with disabilities at higher risk for getting COVID-19 or having severe illness if infected with COVID-19; however, some people with disabilities might be at a higher risk of infection or severe illness because of their age, underlying medical conditions or their disability which could put them at greater risk of being exposed and acquiring the infection.

The known underlying health conditions that put one at greater risk for COVID-19 include diabetes, hypertension, asthma, chronic lung disease, severe heart conditions, chronic kidney disease, obesity or a weakened immune system. The following includes some of the other factors that may make a person with a disability more at risk of acquiring COVID-19 or progressing to more severe COVID-19 infection, other than age and underlying chronic conditions:

- The nature of some disabilities may put individuals at a higher risk of infection. For example, people who have difficulties washing their own hands, blind or low-vision Canadians who must physically touch objects for support or to obtain information, and those with trouble understanding and/or following public health guidance on physical distancing may be at higher risk.
- Individuals with disabilities living in long-term residential facilities may face a higher risk of contracting COVID-19 due to proximity to others in communal living and the need to come in contact with people living outside their accommodation.
- Individuals with disabilities interacting with multiple care providers/supports and friends have an increased risk of contracting COVID-19 due to increased exposure.
- Visitor and support person restrictions in hospitals, long-term care homes, congregate and individual dwellings help reduce virus transmission but can put persons with disabilities who require assistance communicating their symptoms and personal care choices at risk.

- Social isolation may impact people with disabilities' physical, social, mental and emotional health and well-being.
- Persons with disabilities may face barriers to accessing COVID-19 public communications and response services and programs, particularly where intersecting vulnerabilities are present, e.g. economic, social, language, race, age and gender.
- Treatment of unrelated health conditions may put a person with disabilities at risk if the health care system is overloaded by COVID-19. This could present barriers to health services for persons with disabilities, and would be felt acutely by persons with multiple disabilities.
- The loss of important services and supports provided through community programming, employment, access to therapies and school can also be detrimental to a persons' overall health and well-being, and lead to regression in positive development for some persons with disabilities.

It is very important that those who work and live with those with disabilities are aware of the considerations needed during COVID-19. Adapting and being creative and proactive at this time is essential to ensure the voices of those with disabilities are heard and responded to.

COVID-19 ASSESSMENT CENTRES

The City worked with public health to establish designated COVID-19 assessment centres. The City was mindful of accessibility and accommodating to those with disabilities. This includes accessibility, which means ensuring that those who can come into the centre have access to the facility (e.g. ramps, accessible parking). This also included support persons for individuals with disabilities who may be afraid, anxious and/or have a cognitive/intellectual disability.

The City also pivoted in responding to the pandemic through targeted health, community and social service programs to ensure that people with disabilities can access and benefit from the same goods, services and facilities in an equitable way as others.



2019-2022 MULTI-YEAR ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

The City developed the 2019-2022 *Multi-Year Accessibility Plan* (MYAP) in 2020. The four-year plan is built upon the previous MYAP and is organized around the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA) standards. The document was developed with advice from people

with disabilities, staff and the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC). Initiatives in the MYAP fall under three categories: completed, in-progress and ongoing.

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	10	-	5	5
Customer Service	10	1	1	6
Employment	6	1	1	1
Design of Public Spaces	21	3	7	4
TOTAL	54	5	14	35



GENERAL ACCESSIBILITY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

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The City of Vaughan's [commitment to accessibility](#) strives to achieve the requirements outlined by the 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 providing training to staff on the requirements of the standards referred to in the IASR.



STATUS OF GENERAL ACCESSIBILITY INITIATIVES: ONGOING

Initiative #1

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

Initiative #2

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

Initiative #3

Continue to cross-reference existing programs and processes 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 related knowledge 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 maintaining compliance with the regulation and improving 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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The Information and Communications Standards under the IASR requires the City of Vaughan to communicate and provide information in ways that are accessible to people with disabilities. This includes accessible access to public safety information, materials, feedback, communication supports, formats, and website content.

The City of Vaughan, through the Information and Technology Management department, 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 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan outlines these initiatives to support our legislated obligations under the Information and Communication Standard.

- Recreation Services eNewsletter
- Behavioural and geo-targeted mobile ads
- Targeted emails to clients via PerfectMind Online Registration System
- Digital outdoor signs across the city
- Media releases posted on the City's website



STATUS OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS INITIATIVES: COMPLETED

Initiative #10 Considered individual needs of persons with disabilities and proactively provided accessible formats and communication supports or other accommodations to ensure equitable outcomes.

Initiative #11 Consistent messaging was deployed across various print, digital, web and social media channels to maximize reach among residents of all ages and abilities.

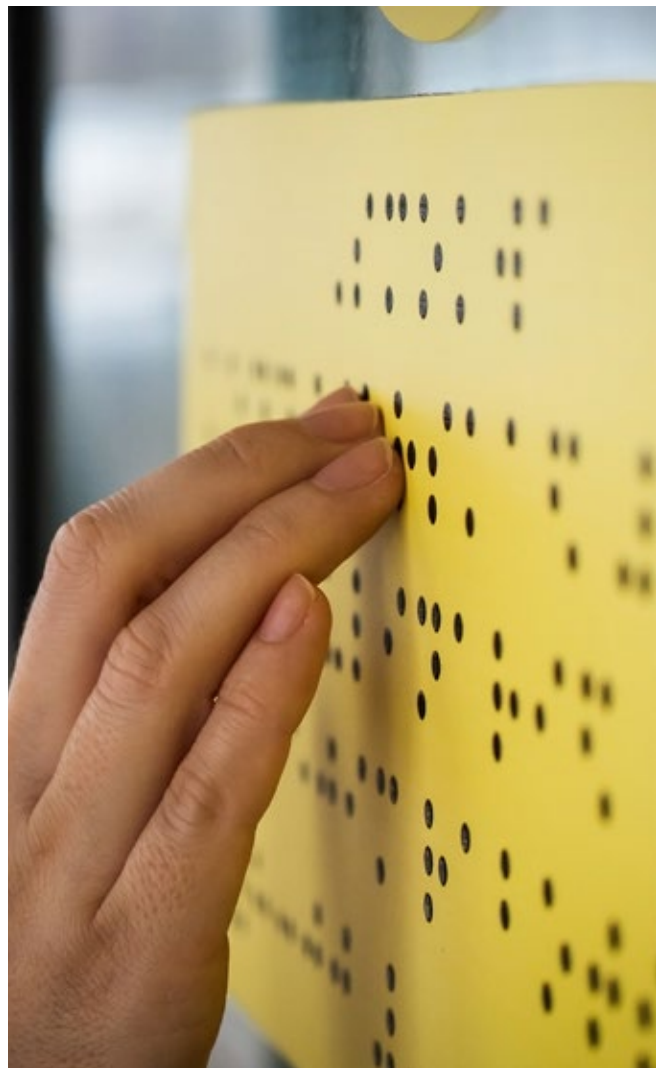
Initiative #12 Signage and posters were developed with enhanced visuals to ensure they are easy to read and be understood by persons with disabilities.

Initiative #13 The City regularly reached out to and communicated with residents who may not have an active online or social media presence by displaying important messaging on mobile signs at major intersections, paid media (e.g., ads on York Region Transit buses, TV ads at Tim Hortons), as well as direct mail (e.g., postcards to Vaughan households and condominiums).

Initiative #14 Recreation Services has worked closely with Corporate and Strategic Communications to ensure consistent messaging was deployed across the City's website, social media and eNews channels, as well as the accounts administered by Mayor and Members of Council.

Initiative #15 The "Participant with Special Needs Information Form" was included in PerfectMind and provided in an alternate format upon request.

Initiative #16 Throughout the pandemic, Recreation Services and Corporate and Strategic Communications worked to ensure



consistent messaging was deployed across the City's website, social media and eNews channels, as well as the accounts administered by Mayor and Members of Council.

Initiative #17 The City also leveraged various digital communication channels to reach residents, including persons with disabilities, which was crucial during recreation facility closures.

- Recreation Services webpages
- Recreation Services social media (Instagram, Facebook and YouTube)
- Recreation eGuide (operates on HTML 5, responsive and disability-friendly)

STATUS OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS INITIATIVES: IN-PROGRESS

Initiative #18 Develop 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 #19 Updating fonts and exploring duplicate publications in large print formats and alternative mediums such as audiotapes and CDs.

Initiative #20 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.

Initiative #21 Accessible Events Checklist is being developed to ensure that events are accessible to persons with disabilities.

Initiative #22 A seasonal eGuide is being developed to be 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 and WCAG 2.0 compliant) – user experience is dependent on browser preferences/settings.

STATUS OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS INITIATIVES: ONGOING

Initiative #23 Enhancing accessibility by striving to update the use of plain language and videos with subtitles on an ongoing basis.

Initiative #24 Continue to ensure residents have improved access to public information on the City of Vaughan's website by providing alternative formats.

Initiative #25 Continue to invest in assistive hearing devices to communicate effectively with customers while addressing their needs.

Initiative #26 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 #27 Notices to be large print and may include various font sizes, contrast colours to communicate more effectively with the public.

Initiative #28 Use of accessible, multi-platform communications tactics to convey important messaging to the community regarding recreation programs, services, events and news updates.



CUSTOMER SERVICE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

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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 #29 Recreation Services modified existing programs and developed a Virtual Program Strategy for 2020.

Initiative #30 Recreation Services provided modified on-site specialized summer camps and virtual programs and workshops for persons with disabilities, and stayed connected with the community through social media.

Initiative #31 To ensure the safety of staff and participants, Recreation Services developed COVID-19 intake processes and provided one-on-one support staff to support the needs of those individuals with behavioural issues, mental health and personal needs.

Initiative #32 Recreation Services developed Summer Camp COVID-19 Procedures to ensure compliance with the Provincial Health and Safety Guidelines, and provided training to all recreation and facilities staff.

Initiative #33 Recreation Services developed enhanced cleaning procedures in all facilities and during the program delivery, as well as provided enhanced PPE for staff supporting participants with disabilities.

STATUS OF CUSTOMER SERVICE INITIATIVES: IN-PROGRESS

Initiative #34 Configuring the PerfectMind online registration system that provides online and mobile access to individuals with and without disabilities to book recreation programs.

STATUS OF CUSTOMER SERVICE INITIATIVES: ONGOING

Initiative #35 Recreation Services continues to provide modified services in general programs, aquatics, summer camps and fitness, and supports for persons with disabilities

Initiative #36 Recreation Services continues to liaise with external service organizations to provide enhanced funding for access and support of persons with disabilities.

Initiative #37 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 #38 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 #39 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, specialty classes (e.g., TEAM fitness program, gentle fitness classes)

Initiative #40 Continue to assess the 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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The Employment Standards under the IASR requires that the City of Vaughan support the recruitment and accommodation of employees with disabilities. The City of Vaughan shall consider the accessibility needs of its employees with disabilities, as well as individual accommodation plans. The City of Vaughan will take steps to prevent and remove accessibility barriers pertaining to employment through training programs, recruitment strategies and employment opportunities.

The City of Vaughan is committed to treating all people in a way that allows them to maintain their dignity and independence. The City promises to meet the needs of people with disabilities in a timely manner by preventing and removing barriers to accessibility and supporting the goals of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA).

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





STATUS OF EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVES: COMPLETED

Initiative #41 Completed the business case to hire a Diversity and Inclusion Officer to enhance diversity, equity and inclusion.

STATUS OF EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVES: ONGOING

Initiative #42 Provided volunteer opportunities through the Expand Pathways partnership program for youth with disabilities to ensure they gain volunteer/work experiences and independence.

Initiative #43 Continue to review new employment standards and revise action plan to ensure Human Resources and the Corporation complies with new standards.

Initiative #44 Continue to review provision of information regarding the availability of accommodation in recruitment.

Initiative #45 Continue to ensure that performance management processes account for accessibility needs.



DESIGN OF PUBLIC SPACES ACCOMPLISHMENTS

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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 #46 The City hired consultants to develop 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.

Initiative #47 Signs, automatic door openers and additional designated accessible parking, universal washrooms and change areas have been installed/upgraded to provide easier direct access to the community centres and activity rooms.

Initiative #48 Installed automatic door openers where necessary for ease of movement when entering and exiting each department.

STATUS OF DESIGN OF PUBLIC SPACES INITIATIVES: IN-PROGRESS

Initiative #49 Implementing a Global Positioning 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 #50 Option to check materials independently at express checkouts. Incorporated for new library construction. Voice-activated information retrieval.

Initiative #51 Braille included on directional signage and elevator buttons within Vaughan Public Libraries facilities while continuing to include on all new signage.

Initiative #52 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, telephone, storage and files.

Initiative #53 Continue to ensure physical barriers are removed (i.e., storage, photocopiers, printers and recycling bins) while maintaining minimum aisle widths.

Initiative #54 Maintaining a clear path of travel around boardroom tables and at egress points (i.e., chairs, screens, portable presentation equipment).

Initiative #55 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.

STATUS OF DESIGN OF PUBLIC SPACES INITIATIVES: ONGOING

Initiative #56 Continue to purchase 17-inch monitors as part of the computer replacement program at Vaughan Public Libraries.

Initiative #57 Enhancing safety for pedestrians with low vision by continuously updating engineering standards and design criteria to include directional lines at new commercial driveways.

Initiative #58 Developing new signage and warning signs at trails, walkways, entrances and stormwater management ponds.

Initiative #59 Continue to increase mobility for people with physical disabilities by continuing to inspect park sidewalks utilizing inspection sheets and schedule repairs under an annual contract.

Initiative #60 Continue to repair/replace sidewalks for safer pedestrian and wheelchair movement.

Initiative #61 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 #62 Repairing potholes in accordance with the Ministry of Transportation's regulation for safer pedestrian and wheelchair travel.

Initiative #63 Continue to apply dust suppressants seasonally and as required to reduce complaints from residents with allergy/respiratory problems.

Initiative #64 Continue to provide a residential driveway windrow clearing program.

Initiative #65 Identify libraries currently not able to provide barrier-free access to the library; seek funding approval for renovation. New libraries to incorporate accessibility standards to continue to ensure new buildings are accessible.

Initiative #66 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

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 2020, the City informed or consulted with the Accessibility Advisory Committee on the following:

- Office of the Chief Information Officer provided a presentation titled “Accessibility Perspective (Technology)”
- Director of Facility Management provided a presentation titled “Facility Management – Infrastructure Development”
- Nastaran Saberi and Justin Murfitt, GEOMATE, Westmount Road North, Waterloo, provided a presentation titled “Introduction to AccessMate”
- Director of Corporate and Strategic Communications, the Manager of Marketing and Creative Services and the Communications Advisor (External and Website Content Management) provided a presentation titled “Enhancing the Citizen Experience through Accessibility”
- Philip O’Sullivan, Senior Architect, Senior Associate, Perkins + Will; and Stephanie Payne, Project Manager, The MBTW Group, provided a presentation titled “Carrville Community Centre, Library and District Park”
- Interim Deputy City Manager, Community Services and Director and Chief Licensing Officer, By-law Compliance, Licensing and Permit Services provided a presentation titled “By-law and Compliance”

Next Steps

The City continues to work to achieve a barrier-free city where all residents and visitors feel included. The 2019-2022 *Multi-Year Accessibility Plan* will be presented to Council for approval at the beginning of 2021.

For more information on the City of Vaughan’s accessibility plans and initiatives, visit vaughan.ca/accessibility.





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