



# City of Owen Sound

## Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

2024-2028

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The City of Owen Sound is committed to ensuring that City Council and all levels of City staff identify, plan, implement, and evaluate strategies and opportunities that sustain and maintain the rights of persons with disabilities and their families to barrier-free programs, services, and opportunities. The City has a goal to be a welcoming, safe and supportive community that provides for the diverse needs of all residents and visitors. In so doing, the City fulfills its requirements under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA) and exceeding them where possible. This Multi-Year Accessibility Plan outlines the steps we are taking to meet those requirements and to improve opportunities for persons with disabilities.

Ontario Regulation 191/11: Integrated Accessibility Standards (IASR) under the AODA requires that the City, as a public sector organization with over fifty (50) employees, create a multi-year accessibility plan, review and update it at least once every five (5) years, and post it on the City's website.

Our plan shows how we will play our role in making Ontario an accessible province for all Ontarians.

The AODA requires that the City establish an accessibility advisory committee ("AAC") to develop annual accessibility plans and to seek the AAC's advice on certain matters. Since 2003, the City has had an AAC that is comprised of Council members and persons with disabilities in accordance with the legislation. This Committee has provided valuable input to City Council. In February 2024, the City will join the Grey County Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee who will continue the work toward creating an accessible and inclusive environment.



The City has a team of staff from across the Corporation, as well as from the Owen Sound & North Grey Union Public Library and Owen Sound Police Service, who have worked together to develop and update the plan. All staff in the corporation are committed to consulting with the AAC and implementing matters of accessibility in compliance with the AODA.



The Corporate Accessibility Team will continue to supervise and monitor compliance, develop policy, and report to the Grey County Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee and City Council.





## 2. STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

Through adoption of this Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, the City renews its commitment to providing, to the greatest extent possible, municipal policies, services, programs, and facilities that are accessible to residents, taxpayers, and visitors of all abilities. The City recognizes and confirms its commitment to the four guiding principles of the AODA:

1. **Dignity:** Service is provided in a way that allows persons with disabilities to maintain self respect and the respect of others.
2. **Full Inclusion (Independence):** All people shall have the opportunity to do things on their own without unnecessary help or interference from others.
3. **Integration:** Service is provided in a way that all persons with disabilities can benefit from the same service, in the same place, and in the same or similar way as other customers, unless an alternative measure is necessary to enable persons with disabilities to access those services.
4. **Equal Opportunity:** Service is provided to persons with disabilities in such a way that they have an opportunity to access services, programs, and facilities equal to those opportunities given to others.



### **3. PAST ACHIEVEMENTS TO REMOVE AND PREVENT BARRIERS: 2019 – 2023 MULTI-YEAR ACCESSIBILITY PLAN**

#### **CUSTOMER SERVICE**

The City continued to meet the requirements of the Customer Service Standards under the IASR and continued to seek and implement best practices in delivering programs and services in an inclusive and accessible manner.

- Policy CrS-HR62 – Accessible Customer Service Standards was reviewed and updated in 2021. The updated policy includes information on assistive devices, consulting with the person with a disability to understand their needs, and waiving payment for a support person if payment to access the City operated facility is required.
- Utilized self-service voting kiosks with accessibility enabled at all Help Centres in the 2022 Municipal Election.
- In 2019, the service counters at the Owen Sound & North Grey Union Public Library were retrofitted to comply with accessibility standards.

#### **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS**

The City continued to ensure the availability and access to information and communications for persons with disabilities.

- In 2021, the City began using a new meeting and agenda management software (eSCRIBE) with enabled accessibility features. New and accessible agenda formats (PDF and HTML) are available to the public. Livestreaming and video recording of all Council and Committee meetings is also completed through eSCRIBE. Closed captioning is enabled and residents may watch from anywhere, making them more accessible to the public.
- A statement is included on the City's website informing users that all documents are available in an alternate format upon request.
- In 2020, a phone extension was created that includes any road and/or sidewalk closures within the City.
- In 2023, the City launched OurCity Owen Sound, an accessible public engagement platform that invites the public to get involved by sharing their feedback, ideas, and questions on City projects, initiatives, and services.
- An accessible shelter checklist was developed and is included in the Emergency Response Plan.

- In 2023, OwenSound.ca began a functional update that focuses on inclusive design to help people better navigate the site and access online services from all types of devices.

## EMPLOYMENT

The City continued to ensure inclusivity with recruitment and hiring processes and retention of employees with disabilities.



- Policy HR002 – Accessibility – Employment Standards was reviewed and updated in 2021 and 2023. The updated policy provides further clarification around Individual Accommodation Plans as detailed in the IASR, as well as the addition of standard definitions.
- New Inclusion Strategy, 2023 – 2028 was adopted by City Council in 2023 to assist in the City’s continued efforts to build a diverse and inclusive workforce, enabling the City to provide programs and services to residents by incorporating the use of diversity and inclusion lenses.

## PROCUREMENT

The City continued to incorporate accessibility criteria and features into its procurement practices so that goods, services, and facilities are more accessible to persons with disabilities, unless it is not practicable to do so.

- Accessibility requirements have been included in all agreements between the City and third-party service providers.
- Bid solicitation documents were updated to incorporate accessibility checklists for staff when planning procurement.

## SELF-SERVICE KIOSKS

The City continued to take steps to make self-service kiosks accessible to persons with disabilities so that they could be used independently and securely.

- Utilized self-service voting kiosks with accessibility enabled at all Help Centres in the 2022 Municipal Election.



## TRAINING

The City continued to train every person after being hired as well as every volunteer. The City maintained records of the training provided including the dates on which the training was provided and the number of individuals to whom it was provided.

## DESIGN OF PUBLIC SPACES

The City continued to identify, remove, and prevent barriers in public buildings and spaces by making sure that new construction and major changes to existing features did not create any new barriers.

- The Kelso Beach at Nawash Park Master Plan was updated in 2023 and includes goals and objectives for improved accessibility at the park.
- The Official Plan (2021) was updated to include policies that support accessibility in development and land use planning applications, as well as works undertaken by the City.
- New playground equipment was installed at the Harrison Park Tot Lot Playground, Timber McArthur Playground, and Duncan McLellan Playground, meeting accessibility standards.



- New accessible surfacing was installed at St. Julien Park Playground in 2020.
- Accessibility upgrades were completed as part of the Farmers' Market Pavilion construction in 2019.



- Between 2019 and 2023, accessible washroom renovations were completed at the Harry Lumley Bayshore Community Centre, Kelso Beach at Nawash Park Campground, Duncan McLellan Park, Harrison Park (pool building and several washrooms), Tom Thomson Art Gallery, Tom Williams Park, West Side Boat Launch washroom facility, and East Side Boat Launch washroom facility.
- Accessibility upgrades were completed at the Tom Thomson Art Gallery in 2023, including a new accessible entrance and a new accessible elevator.
- Accessibility upgrades were completed at the Harrison Park Community Centre in 2021, including an accessible concrete ramp and stairs with handrails at the main entrance with automatic door openers; a universal accessible washroom with adequate space for a future adult change table; and a ramp with a handrail and non-slip epoxy floor that provides accessible entry into the kitchen.
- New concrete bleachers were installed at Duncan McLellan Park, with accessible seating in 2020.
- In 2020 and 2021, accessible handrails were installed throughout the entire arena of the Harry Lumley Bayshore Community Centre following public feedback from spectators of the OHL's Owen Sound Attack.
- Between 2019 and 2023, new audible pedestrian signals were installed throughout the River District and crosswalks were upgraded to meet current standards.
- Accessible benches were installed at Harrison Park, Greenwood Cemetery, and along the waterfront trail servicing the Inner Harbour.
- In 2020, a new barrier curb and sidewalk were installed along 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue West, in partnership with the Township of Georgian Bluffs, to provide a safe and accessible path of travel for students to Keppel-Sarawak School and pedestrians living in the area.
- The 10<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge was redeveloped, including a wider multi-use path for pedestrian travel, audible pedestrian signals, and tactile walking surface indicators.
- An accessibility checklist was implemented for all Site Plan reviews regarding matters of accessibility.
- In 2023, the City consulted with the AAC regarding the exterior paths of travel and rest areas associated with the redevelopment of Alpha Street and the associated exterior path of travel.

## TRANSPORTATION

The City continued to provide conventional and specialized transportation services through a contract with a third party, ensuring that the contractor followed all requirements under the Transportation Standard of the IASR.

- Upgraded 10 bus stop locations with AODA-compliant asphalt surface in 2019.
- Upgraded one (1) bus stop location with AODA-compliant concrete surface and transit shelter in 2019.
- New fully accessible fleet was put into service in 2023.
- Mobility transit application was updated in 2023 to make it more accessible and user-friendly.
- Implemented a pilot program to offer an Affordability Rate monthly bus pass designed for Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) participants in November 2023.



## 4. STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS: 2024 – 2028

### CUSTOMER SERVICE

The City of Owen Sound is committed to providing accessible customer service to persons with disabilities. This means that the City will provide goods, services, and facilities to persons with disabilities with the same high quality and timeliness as others.

- Develop a new Corporate Customer Service Strategy in 2024 in consultation with the Grey County Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee consistent with the requirements of the regulations.
- Implement a Notice of Service Disruption procedure to support Policy CrS-HR62 – Accessible Customer Service Standards and to ensure consistency in communication of disruptions to City services.

### INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS

The City is committed to making its information and communications accessible to persons with disabilities.

- Continue to undertake the update of the City’s website to improve accessibility in 2024 to conform with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA and provide users with an accessible online experience.
- Procure an online accessibility module to audit the City’s website continually and automatically to ensure compliance with WCAG 2.0 Level AA.
- As grants and staff resources become available, the Owen Sound & North Grey Union Public Library will investigate the feasibility of digitizing select areas of the Local History Collection.
- Implement Virtual City Hall (VCH) in Spring of 2024. VCH is an accessible online resource available 24/7 that allows taxpayers to manage a variety of City accounts, regenerate past and current bills, or easily make payments through the VCH platform, without having to toggle between webpages.
- Develop the 2026 Election Accessibility Plan in consultation with the Grey County Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee.



## **EMPLOYMENT**

The City is committed to fair and accessible employment practices.

- Monitor and update policies as required.

## **PROCUREMENT**

The City is committed to fair and accessible procurement practices.

- Update purchase order contract terms and conditions to include the requirement for training on accessibility standards.
- Continue to incorporate the requirements of AODA legislation when completing updates to the Purchasing By-law, the Terms and Conditions for Purchase Orders, relevant policies, and internal documentation.

## **SELF-SERVICE KIOSKS**

The City is committed to incorporating accessibility features and considering accessibility for persons with disabilities when designing, procuring or acquiring self-service kiosks.

## **TRAINING**

The City is committed to providing training in the requirements of Ontario's accessibility laws and the *Ontario Human Rights Code* as it applies to persons with disabilities.

- Continue to review and update accessibility policies and ensure that these policies are shared with staff and staff receive training on the implementation of updated or new policies.
- Provide training opportunities to staff on creating accessible documents and website content.

## **DESIGN OF PUBLIC SPACES**

The City will meet accessibility laws when building or making major changes to public spaces.

- Reconstruct the Weaver's Creek Boardwalk in 2024 – 2025 in consultation with the Grey County Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee.

- Develop procedures for preventative and emergency maintenance of the accessible elements in public spaces and temporary disruptions.
- Continue to review site plans using the accessibility checklist and consult with the Grey County Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee on subdivisions as well as new capital work being undertaken by the City of Owen Sound.
- Update City Policies O35 - Changing On-street Parking Conditions and O49 - Review of City Engineering Projects in consultation with the Grey County Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee to reflect AODA requirements.
- The City will put procedures in place to prevent service disruptions to the accessible parts of public spaces.



## TRANSPORTATION

The City is committed to providing conventional and specialized transportation services that are compliant with accessibility standards.

- Implement an app through Google Transit to provide public transit information in real time.
- Update the City's Transit Accessibility Plan in consultation with the Grey County Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee.
- Ensure that any vehicles added to the fleet meet the legislated technical requirements.
- Bring forward a report to a future Grey County Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee meeting respecting a review of the mobility transit application form and fare subsidy which will include considerations for:
  - Other possible means tests for the reduced conventional transit fare;
  - Streamlining the renewal process;

- A review of the mobility transit application form for screen reader use, literacy level, and usability for people in the community; and
- A checkbox and guidelines for healthcare professionals signing the mobility transit application forms.

## 5. REVIEW AND MONITORING

This Multi-Year Accessibility Plan will be reviewed annually. As part of each annual review, a status report detailing the progress of measures taken to implement this plan will be presented to City Council and published on the City's website, noting that they are available in an alternate format upon request.

## 6. FOR MORE INFORMATION

This Multi-Year Accessibility Plan was created by City staff in consultation with the Accessibility Advisory Committee and adopted by City Council on February 12, 2024.

For more information on this accessibility plan, please contact the Clerks Division:

Owen Sound City Hall  
808 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue East  
Owen Sound, ON N4K 2H4  
519-376-1440  
Email: [clerks@owensound.ca](mailto:clerks@owensound.ca)

Our accessibility plan is publicly posted at [www.owensound.ca/accessibility](http://www.owensound.ca/accessibility).

Standard and accessible formats of this document are free upon request from the Clerks Division.

