



# East Gwillimbury

## Town of East Gwillimbury Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2024 Annual Status Report

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## INTRODUCTION

The Town of East Gwillimbury (EG) 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 EG. 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 reflects EG's commitment to creating a barrier-free community.

The 2024 Status Report highlights the key actions taken from January 1 to December 31, 2024, to implement the Town's MYAP. This report builds on the progress made in 2023 and highlights the efforts in 2024 to enhance accessibility across the Town. 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 year the MYAP launched, EG made significant progress in enhancing accessibility and inclusivity. Key accomplishments included the review and update of the Accessibility Policy to align with the AODA and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation, the initiation of a review of the Accessible Customer Service policy, and the provision of Behaviour Management Systems training to recreation staff. Additionally, the Town initiated the development of a procedure for creating accessible content and conducted a review of PDF documents on its website to ensure compliance with the AODA and the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). The AODA training program for all staff, council members, and volunteers was updated and launched on the Town’s Learning Management System. Trail head signage was updated to integrate requirements under the AODA’s Accessibility Standards, and an external consultant evaluated all Town playgrounds for compliance with the AODA and Annex H of the Canadian Standard Association (CSA) Standard Z614-20, which sets guidelines for making children’s play spaces accessible.

As of 2024, the Town has completed or started work on 14 out of the 23 MYAP initiatives, representing approximately 60% of the total initiatives. This is up from 52% in 2023\*. The table below summarizes the status of the MYAP initiatives, and the progress made to date.

\*Note: The percentage of initiatives that were completed or in-progress in the 2023 Annual Status Report was incorrectly shown as 43.5%. It should have been 52%, as indicated above.

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	-	3	2	60%
Employment	2	1	1	-	100%
Design of Public Spaces and the Built Environment	6	1	4	1	83%
Transportation	3	-	-	3	0%

## Progress to Date

This section of the report provides an overview of the progress EG 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 the procurement process to include requirements for AODA compliant goods, services, facilities.

### Highlights

In 2024, EG continued its review of the process for bringing items to the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) for consultation, as outlined in the AODA and its standards. This may include site plan applications, buildings that the municipality constructs, purchases or renovates, new or renovated recreational trails, outdoor play spaces, and more. The Town explored best practices from other municipalities and engaged in discussions with the AAC to determine the most effective approach. With the insights gained from these consultations, the Town plans to formalize the process in 2025, ensuring that the AAC is appropriately consulted on relevant projects to enhance accessibility and inclusivity in the community.

## 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

Building on the progress made in 2023, EG drafted a revised Accessible Customer Service Policy in 2024. In addition, through 2024, the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility established the Customer Service Standards Development Committee. The committee released its initial report outlining recommended changes to the standard for public consultation, which closed on February 6, 2025. Once the public feedback has been considered, a final report and recommendations will be submitted to the Minister for consideration.

As changes to the province's Customer Service Standards are anticipated to be forthcoming, the Town has temporarily put the policy update on hold to ensure that any necessary adjustments can be made to reflect the updated Standards. This approach ensures that the Town remains aligned with the latest accessibility requirements and continues to provide the best possible service to all residents and visitors.

In 2024, EG introduced a sledge hockey drop-in program at the East Gwillimbury Sports Complex. Although the facility was not originally designed to support sledge hockey, the Town took proactive steps by consulting with individuals with disabilities who expressed interest in the program, as well as the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC). This collaborative approach ensured that the program could be effectively offered to the community. While some assistance may still be required for participants to get on and off the ice surface, the program was well-received and is a successful addition to the Town's recreation offerings. This supports initiative 2.4 and reflects the Town's ongoing commitment to providing inclusive and accessible programs for persons with disabilities.

## 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

In 2024, a draft procedure for creating accessible content was completed. This procedure applies to public-facing and employee-related documents, including content posted to the Town's website and social media channels. It outlines best practices and standards for creating, converting, and testing accessible content, as well as the roles and responsibilities of content managers and creators. Currently in the final stages of review, the procedure will be rolled out in 2025. The rollout will include communication updates to employees and training for applicable staff to ensure effective implementation and compliance.

## 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

During 2024, the Town continued to review its accommodation and return-to-work policies as part of initiative 4.2. Although the goal was to update these policies by the end of the year, the work was included in a larger project aimed at reviewing and updating all People and Belonging policies and procedures. Given the extensive number of policies reviewed in 2024, and the time required to make appropriate and thoughtful updates and provide the necessary communication and education to staff, this work is planned for 2025. The Town remains committed to ensuring all administrative policies are up-to-date and effectively communicated to staff to maintain compliance and operational efficiency.

## 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 5.2: 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 5.3: 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 5.5: 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.
- Initiative 5.6: Integrate accessibility features into new parks and playground structures.



*Pending*

- Initiative 5.4: Improve access to accessible washrooms near outdoor amenities such as sports fields, playgrounds, etc.

**Highlights**

In 2024, EG completed its first accessibility audit of the EG Sports Complex. To do this, the Town engaged the Rick Hansen Foundation, a Canadian non-profit organization founded in 1987 by Paralympic gold medalist Rick Hansen. The Foundation's mission is to inspire, create and deliver innovative solutions that accelerate a global movement to remove barriers to inclusion for people with disabilities. One of the Foundation's key initiatives is conducting Accessibility Audits to assess the accessibility of public spaces and buildings. The Foundation's audits are scored on a rating system, which requires a final rating score of at least 60% to achieve certification from the Foundation, with 80% and higher being regarded as the gold standard.

Through the Foundation's comprehensive assessment, the EG Sports Complex received a 35% rating. The results will help identify how the Town can make thoughtful improvements to the facility to enhance access for all.

The Town also utilized the results to apply for funding of \$611,500 dollars under the province's Community Sport and Recreation Infrastructure Fund (CSRIF), which is cost shared up to 50% with municipalities. The CSRIF provides funding to help communities build, repair, and upgrade sport and recreation facilities. The funding decision is anticipated by Q4 2025.

Moving forward, the Town will continue to conduct accessibility audits of its facilities and use this information to develop a multi-year facility improvement plan, with related capital improvements incorporated in the annual budget process.

Following consultations with the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) in 2024, the Town made changes to the layout of the Farmers Market event. Based on these discussions, the layout was modified to position most of the vendors along the designated path through the event space, rather than across the lawn. This change significantly improved accessibility for persons with disabilities and received positive feedback from residents. The Town remains committed to consulting with the AAC on its event strategies and making continuous enhancements to ensure that all residents and visitors can participate in and enjoy Town events.

## 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

In 2024, the Town continued to build on the foundation laid in 2023, making significant strides in various initiatives. The Town is committed to building a more accessible and inclusive community for all residents, visitors, and staff and will continue its efforts to remove barriers and create opportunities for people with disabilities.

The Town would like to thank the members of the EG Accessibility Advisory Committee, Town staff, 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.