



annual status report

# accessibility

2022

multi-year accessibility plan



## our plan

The Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville is committed to removing and preventing barriers through sound and effective accessibility planning. To ensure residents of all ages and abilities can enjoy the same opportunities as they live, work, play and invest in our Town.

The Town serves an ever-changing population, including more than 7,300 seniors and 9,100 people with disabilities (1 in 5 people). This annual report describes the progress and measures in 2022 taken by the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville in implementing the Town's 2020-2025 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.

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# accessibility advisory committee

The Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville's Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) is a statutory volunteer committee that acts as an advisory body for Council. The AAC advises Council on accessibility planning and related standards to prevent and reduce barriers experienced by persons with disability. Makes recommendations to Council on the development and implementation of the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville in areas including but not limited to:

Multi-year Accessibility Plan, preparation of accessibility reports, promoting accessibility and inclusion and review of site plan application drawings for accessibility.

The AAC met throughout 2022 via hybrid format

(virtual and in person). During meetings, updates are provided to the Committee which may include presentations or discussions regarding accessibility-related matters, lead by staff or an external guest. A sampling of initiatives completed by the AAC this year includes:

- Reviewed eleven (11) development applications for accessibility and provided feedback
- Collaborated with the Main Street Reconstruction Staff Working Group
- Reviewed: Town's Accessible Elections Plan, Town's updated Corporate Accessibility Policy, and proposed updates to Town's website

# accessibility training

The Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville is committed to providing training on the Integrated Accessibility Standards and Ontario Human Rights Code to all employees and volunteers. Third parties who provide goods, services or facilities on behalf of the Town attest to having been provided with the appropriate accessibility awareness training through the procurement process.

The Town continued to record and track employee learning and development activities related to AODA and accessibility requirements.

In 2022, the Town conducted a review of the accessible training program provided to staff to identify possible improvement to the current process. Based on

the review findings, the following was completed:

- Added "Understanding Human Rights Training AODA Edition" to staff onboarding training
- Provided training on use of remediation software for Digital Communications Coordinator; and
- Provided "Unconscious Bias" training for Senior Leadership Team, Managers and Supervisors.



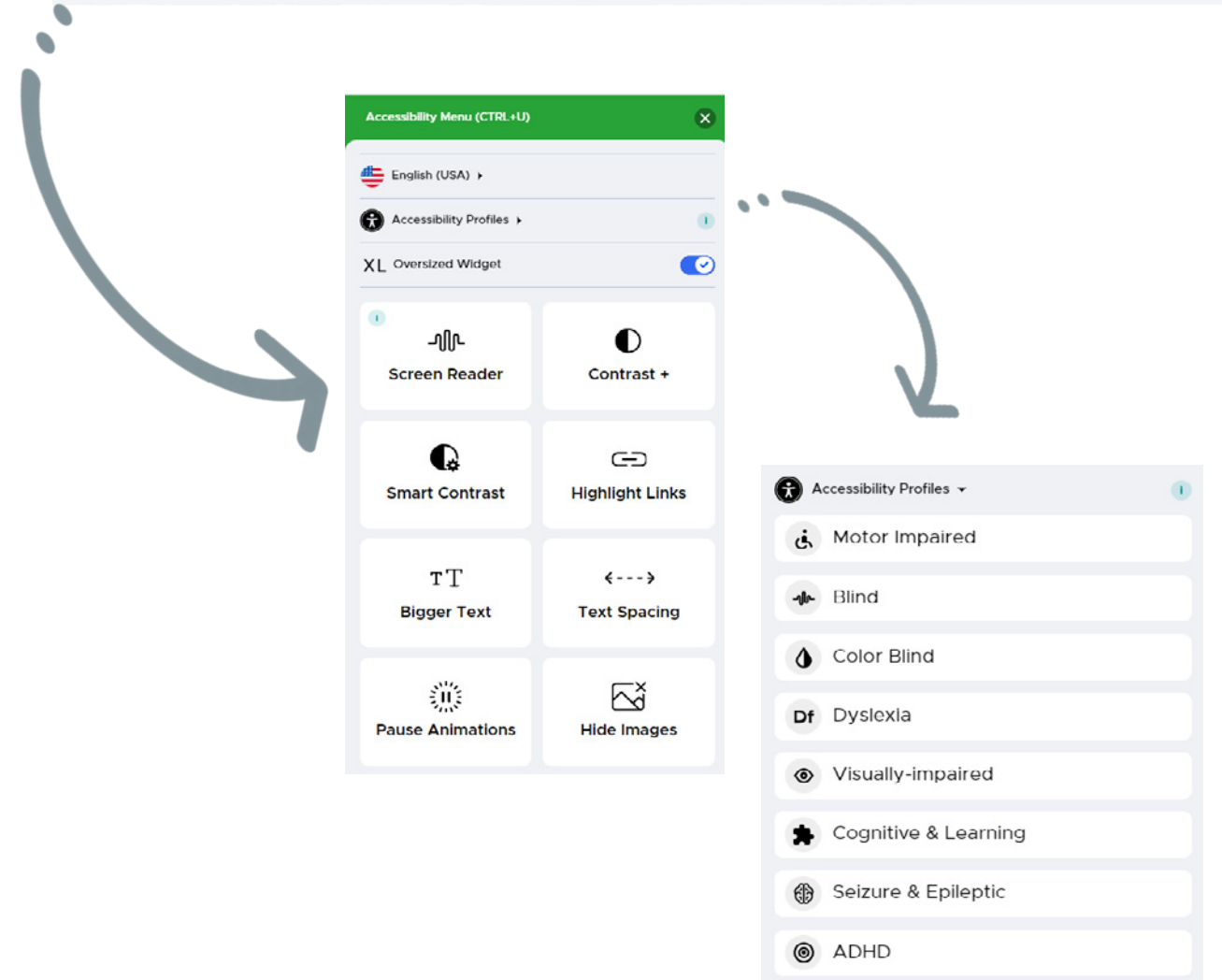
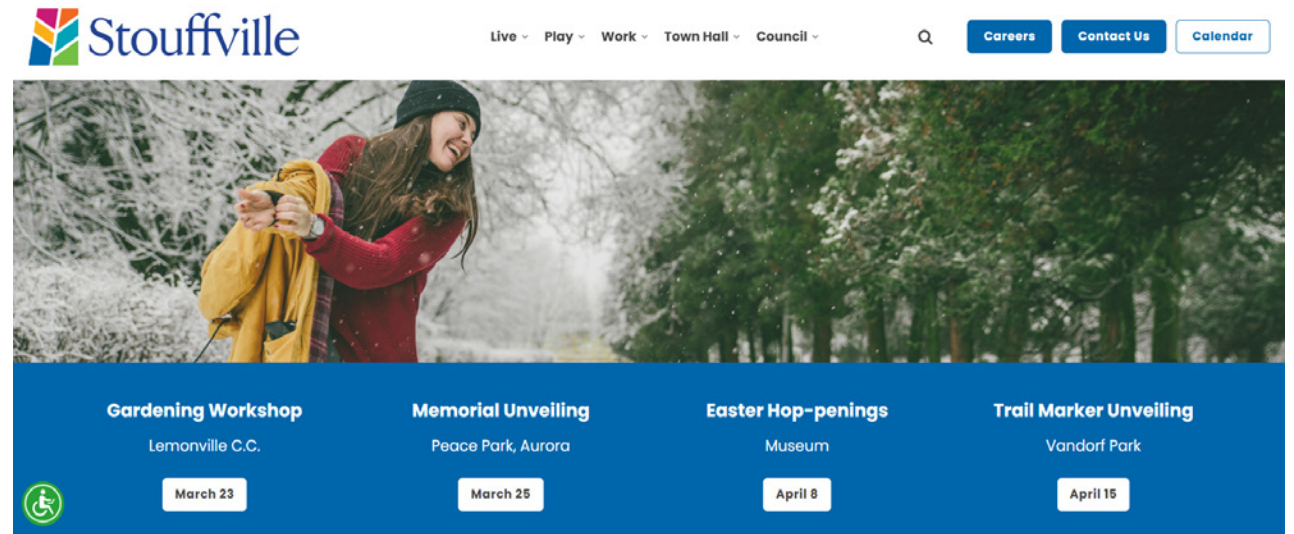
# information and communication

Multiple communication initiatives were completed to ensure information is provided in ways that are accessible to people with disabilities. The Town strives to continuously improve accessibility of communication to enhance the quality of service available to the community.

In the last year, the Town:

- Has strengthened their AODA compliance team with the addition of a Digital Communications Coordinator who, under their portfolio, coordinates all digital accessibility initiatives, including overseeing the monitoring of the Town's digital properties and ensuring they are compliant.
- Continues to monitor digital AODA compliance with regular internal audits and remediation of Town website content to ensure that it meets or exceeds accessibility compliance requirements.
- Continued developing Town's digital accessibility standard, guidelines and templates to ensure Town is providing clear and accessible information and communication.
- Document remediation resources posted on Town's internal website, to ensure information readily available for all divisions that develop and create web content to utilize.
- The Town regularly reviews compliance and usability best practices to identify ways to improve accessibility of Town's public facing website.
- One of the new improvements launched by the Town is accessibility software, Userway, an online website scanning and monitoring platform. This is used to scan the Town's digital properties on a regular basis. This platform identifies error(s), issue(s) and provides recommendations based on WCAG2.0 accessibility standards. And timely action is taken based on the results.

- Userway provides users with a widget on every page of the website. This accessible feature allows the public to adapt the website to their individual needs. By simply utilizing the user-triggered enhancement menu, they can access features such as screen reader, contrast, smart contrast, highlight links, text size, text spacing, pause animations, legible fonts, cursor, tooltips, page structure, line height, text align, dictionary and saturation.
- To ensure continual accessibility compliance, new digital information is processed through an internal audit system prior to posting information on the Town's website.
- Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library has been updating their website, which includes new accessibility features (including Userway software) to enhance navigation abilities.
- Town's accessibility page was updated with additional information regarding community services available, providing ease of access to community members. Including but not limited to: accessible transportation, financial assistance, and accessibility awareness events
- In 2022, Council and committee meetings which were held on virtual platform, moved to a hybrid format. While still maintaining accessibility features such as auto-generated captions with live transcriptions.



# customer service

The Town is committed to customer service excellence and strives to provide services, programs and facilities for all people of the community so that the service outcome is the same for all members of the community, irrespective of ability.

All employees, volunteers and those providing service to the public have been trained to provide services in a manner that respects the dignity and independence and is sensitive to the individual's needs and abilities.

## strategies

The Town continues to receive and respond to feedback and ensure processes are accessible for persons with disabilities; provide timely notice of service disruptions in various accessible platforms, when needed; and provide various adapted and integrated community programs.

Some successful strategies included:

- Reduced ratio programs
- Partnering with Community Living York South whose mission is to support people with disability to live, learn, work and participate in the community.
- Partnership with Able Network: Operating out of Latcham Hall, this community-based program offers inclusive opportunities for young adults with intellectual disabilities, who otherwise wouldn't have local opportunities available to them.
- Offer subsidy support to reduce financial barriers to participating in recreation and heritage programs. The Town's JoinIN! program offers subsidy for municipal run program for residents of all ages in households which fall below the national Low-Income Cut-Off (LICO) threshold and individuals in need of a support

person to integrate into programs.

- Regularly review Town programs and services to ensure inclusive equitable participation of community members.
- To strengthen its partnerships with the Stouffville Chamber of Commerce and local Stouffville businesses to help expand the spectrum of inclusive, diverse, affordable and accessible events and programs in Town.

## diversity, equity, and inclusion plan

In 2022, the Town launched the development of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DE&I) Plan to recognize diversity and inclusion within the organization and communities. This is an important step toward developing municipal policies, protocols and programs and delivering services that are focused on improving the overall 'inclusive' approach to the planning and delivery of municipal services.

Statistics Canada's 2020 reports that the average income of persons with disability is 20% less than that of person without disability. The Town has been focusing on removing financial barriers to participation in Town's organized and supported events and programs to ensure equitable access to programs, events and facilities. Some areas where financial barriers were removed are: free membership at the 55+ Club and museum admittance. The updated policy states that Town events "encourage, attract and promote community involvement, participation at little to no cost". The Town continues to monitor programs and events to ensure that they are affordable and accessible for all community members.

[cometogetherws.ca/dei](https://cometogetherws.ca/dei)

# procurement

The Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville is committed to providing equal opportunity and creating a culture of inclusiveness for all community members by providing services, goods and access to facilities and events in a way that respects everyone's dignity. Accessibility criteria are key requirements incorporated in the Town's procurement process of goods, services and facilities.

Town Staff strives to continuously ensure accessibility obligations are embedded in all stages of the procurement lifecycle. Procurement Services is in the process of collaborating with the York Purchasing Co-operative (YPC) on developing best practices in sourcing accessible services, goods and facilities.

Staff are also creating/updating tools and resources to assist Town employees in meeting accessibility obligations in procurement, such as training, templates, sample language and guidelines. Including but not limited to:

- Developing vendor declaration of compliance form with a lens of anti-discrimination legislation. Declaring vendor will uphold the obligations under provincial and federal legislation, including but not limited to: Ontario Human Rights Code, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disability Act, the Occupational Health and Safety Act, the Employment Standards Act and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.
- Adding requirements for all reports scheduled to be published online; be remediated in an accessible format at Request for Proposal (RFP) process.
- Implementation of accessibility checklist/needs analysis for internal pre-bid requisitions.
- Developing procurement accessibility training for employees and vendors regarding bid requirements.
- Reviewing the Procurement By-law with an AODA lens.



# whitchurch-stouffville public library

The Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library strives to be known as the most innovative, accessible and inclusive learning environment. Below is a sampling of the accessible services offered by the Library.

The Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library has maintained curbside service even after customers were once again able to enter the library. This allows the Library to continue providing materials to those customers who are not able to enter the building (may include mobility ability, reduce possible exposure to protect family member who is immunocompromised, customer with high-risk health – to reduce exposure, etc.).

## adaptive technology

Offers Adaptive Technology Work Station, including but not limited to:

- ZoomText a screen magnifier (enlarges items on computer screen up to 36 times its normal size);
- JAWS a screen reading software that reads aloud the information shown on the screen;
- Kurweil 1000/Kurweil 3000 a scanning, reading, writing and learning software. Works with a flatbed scanner to allow scanned-in text to be converted to speech and read back to the user.

## website

GHD/eSolutions website launching end of February 2023:

- UserWay accessibility access tool offering full WCAG 2.1 compliance, as well as an AI-powered accessibility widget that offers a customized site experience for users with print and text disabilities (keyboard navigation, smart contrast, built-in screen reader, dyslexia-friendly fonts, animation pausing, and more)
- Site design and copy will be fully WCAG 2.0 compliant, with on-site, screen reader-friendly forms and no PDF fillable forms

## content

The Public Library continues to procure accessible content: including but not limited to large print, audiobooks, and digital materials



[wsplibrary.ca](http://wsplibrary.ca)



# accessible employment

The Town has developed several employment policies that support equity in our employment practices including:

- Corporate Accessibility Policy
- Return to Work Program
- Accommodation in the Workplace Policy
- Harassment and Discrimination Free Workplace Policy
- Employee Family Assistance Program

To provide employees with barrier-free employment throughout the employment process, the Town provides recruitment, onboarding, career progression and performance management.

The Town is committed to providing an inclusive community throughout the organization. Over the last year the Town fostered a positive workforce by improving and initiating the following processes:

- The Town continues to encourage employees to self-identify when utilization of Town Accommodation Policy, is needed.
- Offer a return to work process for employees with disabilities.
- Continues to foster a positive and progressive workforce reflecting the residents we serve and promoting diversity at all levels within the organization in an inclusive environment.
- Applicants can request accommodation related to the protected grounds of the Human Rights Code at any stage of the Town's hiring process, i.e., application, interview and placement.
- To assist employees in maintaining mental resiliency through the ever-changing landscape, the Town continues to provide employees with 24/7 access to Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) a confidential resource.
- The Town continues to ensure that accessible software is readily available to staff. The Town utilizes Office 365 products that offer accessibility

features such as closed captioning via Microsoft Teams, immersive reading and voice activated assistance.

- Improve the current Accommodation Form to include an emergency response needs analysis to assist managers and staff in creating individualized emergency plan.
- The Town is in the process of developing accessible templates for Job posting.
- Continual review of people services policies and procedures to continually improve Town's process by identify, prevent and remove barriers to employment and development opportunities. To ensure equity is embed in all process – recruitment, performance, etc.

In 2023, The Town plans to continually foster a culture of employee engagement and inclusion the use of an Employee Engagement Survey.

# municipal elections

Town employees work to improve accessibility of election services through the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affects electors and candidates with disabilities, including:

- Completed accessibility audit of all facilities being considered as voting locations – to proactively identify and remove possible barriers prior to holding elections;
- Developed an Elections Accessibility Plan and consulted with the Town's Accessibility Advisory Committee prior to the elections;
- Provided information regarding accessibility to the candidates during registration;
- Provided accessible voting equipment (with audio ballot, voting hand-held controller with large tactile buttons and Braille labels, Paddles for electors who have limited mobility in their hands; and sip and puff apparatuses) in conjunction with vote tabulators for the Advance Votes.
- Some accessible aids provided at every election site include: magnifying sheets, scratch pads and visual representation of the voting process.
- Providing accessible customer services training to all election workers, including but not limited

to: how to use equipment or devices available at election sites, how to interact with persons with disabilities and process for collecting accessibility feedback.

- Voting Locations were set up to ensure sufficient room for mobility devices to maneuver and providing extra seating for electors who may not be able to stand for long periods;
- Providing Roving Voting to locations to accommodate the Town's vulnerable population and electors who were unable to leave their residences. Roving Voting Places were set up in the five nursing homes/retirement residence withing Whitchurch-Stouffville: Blooming Cove, Stouffville Creek, Parkview Home, Buckingham Manor, and Mon Sheong Stouffville Long-Term Care Centre.
- Providing for Voting Proxies. Voting proxies allow a qualified elector to appoint another qualified elector in the same municipality to vote on their behalf.



# accessible transportation

The Town continues to strive to remove mobility barriers within the community. Removing mobility barriers impacts community health by improving access to health services, employment and social activities.

## public transportation

Public Transit falls under the jurisdiction of York Region. An accessibility service provided by York Region Public Transit includes York Region's Mobility On-Request Paratransit system, visit [yrt.ca/mor](http://yrt.ca/mor) to review services available.

## GO transit

GO Transit connects Stouffville with the Greater Toronto Area and offers accessible trains, buses, stations and services. To learn more about the accessible services visit [gotransit.com/accessibility](http://gotransit.com/accessibility).

## taxis

The Town continues to monitor tariff fees and ensure that licensed owners and operators of taxicabs are prohibited from charging a higher fare or additional fees for persons with disabilities, from charging a fee for storage of mobility aids or assistive devices, ensure that vehicle registration and identification information is on the rear bumper of taxicabs, owners and operators make available vehicle registration and identification information in accessible formats.

The Town continues to encourage taxicab owners to add accessible taxicabs to the community.

## walkways

The Town continues to invest and maintain walkways and roads to enhance the mobility, safety, and accessibility of all, by:

- Completing regular inspection and maintenance of sidewalks, to remove mobility barriers (i.e. trip ledges, cracks and sidewalk damage) for community members with mobility constraints

The Town continues to commit to:

- Plowing and sanding sidewalks within twenty-four (24) hours after the end of snowfall to remove. Clear sidewalks facilitate ease of traversing for people with walking problems.
- Snow plowing of roads to ensure accessibility to street parking. This assist in reducing walk distances to access goods/services for quality of life.
- Regular inspection and maintenance of rest areas to allow to community members to easily access rest areas as needed.
- When installing new or replacement sidewalks, the sidewalk must be designed to ensure pedestrians accessibilities consistent with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act – Built Environment Standards.



## windrows

The Town provides windrow snow clearing service to seniors and physically challenged residents where there is no able-bodied person living in the household at no cost. The snow windrow is the snow bank left across the driveway by the snowplow. For more information on the Ontarians Disabilities Act Built Environment Standards, visit [ontario.ca/laws/regulation/110191](http://ontario.ca/laws/regulation/110191)

## master transportation plan

The Town is in the process of reviewing the Town's Master Transportation Plan. The Master Transportation Plan is shaped by input from Town staff, residents and the expertise of the study team.

[cometogetherws.ca/tmp2022](http://cometogetherws.ca/tmp2022)



# recreation and facilities

## built environment and public spaces

The Town continues to incorporate accessibility features in the design of new facilities and the renewal/rehabilitation of existing facility features. Designing inclusive spaces means that the amenities and services provided within facilities be accessible to all, regardless of age, physical and cognitive abilities. Throughout the past year Town Staff continued to maintain and enhance Town spaces; to offer barrier-free access to all members of the community.

## maintenance

A robust system includes ongoing maintenance of current accessible platforms and equipment. Facility staff continue to inspect and provide preventative maintenance to equipment that eliminates barriers to accessing Town services, including but not limited to:

- Accessible lift assists (Leisure Centre pool and accessible change room and Arena)
- Automatic doors
- Accessible parking lot signage
- Change table, Hoyer lifts, Aqua wheelchairs
- Wheelchair lifts, ramps and elevators

## programming

The Town continues to improve access to recreation and community programming through accessible facility design and the provision of appropriate programming and equipment for people with special needs.

- In the last year, Town has continued to add accessible features to our buildings to improve the user experience from parking lot to play area. Three (3) playground areas was changed to wood fiber (Vandorf and two in Memorial Park). And two existing playground structures (one in Vandorf Park, one in Memorial Park) has been replaced by new structures that offer several accessible components to ensure users of any age and ability can share the same enjoyable experience.
- The Town is in the process of reviewing the possibility of integrating features that may include but is not limited to sensory features (e.g. sensory garden (sight, smell and sound) or sandboxes), as well as active play components to new parks or renewal of existing parks.
- We continue to make annual upgrades to playground accessibility in our parks by replacing pea gravel infill with engineered wood fiber to allow for ease of travel for all users.
- Plans are in place to add additional barrier free washrooms and change area at Memorial Park.
- The Town is in the process of designing an accessible skate trail to be implemented in 2023.

## design guidelines

The Town continues to make progress in creating Accessible Design Guidelines to ensure a consistent approach for the design and development that exceed the minimum standards and therefore to optimize inclusivity and eliminate barriers for individuals with a wide range of disabilities, to:

- Ensure that play facilities and other park amenities are welcoming, is an important consideration for the Town. Play can provide an

appropriate outlet for children who may struggle to express themselves, while helping them to navigate their world in a new and exciting way. It is important to consider not only mobility devices, but those with cognitive and other issues (i.e. autism, sensory disorders, visual and hearing impairments, etc.).

- And strives to incorporate accessibility features such as: lighting, seating, accessible pathways, walkways and entrances where appropriate to assist in creating a more accessible and inclusive environment.



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## Town of Whitchurch–Stouffville

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[townofws.ca/accessibility](https://www.townofws.ca/accessibility)

