

# Annual Accessibility Status Report 2024

## Land Acknowledgment

The Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville acknowledges this land is the treaty territory of the Williams Nations. It is also the traditional territory of other Anishinaabeg peoples, the Wendat, and the Haudenosaunee. We also recognize the contributions of all Indigenous peoples to this place and commit to a continued dialogue and greater respect for the land we have come to share. This recognition of the contributions and historic importance of Indigenous peoples must also be clearly and overtly connected to our collective commitment to make the promise and the challenge of Truth and Reconciliation real in our community.

## Contact information

To request a copy of the report in an alternate format, please contact us at:

Call: 905-640-1910

Mail: [accessibility@townofws.ca](mailto:accessibility@townofws.ca)

Mail: Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville

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Stouffville, Ontario L4A 0Z8

## Let Us Know What You Think

The Town welcomes input and feedback. Public input may be submitted to the Township at the contact information seen above.

## Our Commitment

At the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville, we are dedicated to creating a welcoming and inclusive community where everyone – regardless of abilities – can fully participate in everyday life. Whether living, working, playing or investing in our Town. All residents and community members deserve equal access to opportunities and services.

Guided by our [Inclusive Statement](#), we strive to remove barriers and enhance accessibility so that everyone has equitable experiences and full participation in our community - upholding our vision of a town that is open, connected and welcoming to all.

This annual report showcases key actions and achievements from 2024 that advance the goals of our [2020-2025 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan](#). While not a complete list, the initiatives outlined demonstrate our ongoing dedication to building a more accessible and inclusive Whitchurch-Stouffville.

## Accessibility Advisory Committee

The Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville's Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) is a volunteer group that advises Town Council on accessibility matters. Committee members are passionate advocates who help promote awareness of accessibility and inclusion, ensuring the needs of people with disabilities are considered across the community.

The AAC provides guidance to Council on accessibility planning, policies, and standards, focusing on identifying, preventing, and removing barriers. The Committee reviews initiatives and provide recommendations on a range of initiatives, including the Town's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, accessibility reports, and development applications to promote inclusive public spaces.

In 2024, the AAC met throughout the year using a hybrid format, allowing members to participate both in person and virtually. Meetings included updates, presentations, and discussions led by Town staff and guest speakers on a variety of accessibility-related topics. Key initiatives reviewed and commented on by the Committee included:

- Site plans and the design of accessible public spaces
- Plans to improve playgrounds and community facilities
- Upgrades to the customer service counter at Town Hall

AAC meetings are open to the public and can be attended in person or online. Virtual meetings are streamed [live](#) and include auto-generated captions with live transcription to support accessibility. Visit [townofws.ca](https://townofws.ca) for upcoming meeting dates and times.

## Employment

At the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville, we believe a great workplace is one where everyone feels valued, respected, and supported. That's why we're committed to fair, accessible, and inclusive employment practices that reflect the vibrant community we serve.

In 2024, the Town continued to make progress toward a more welcoming and barrier-free workplace through the following initiatives:

### Accommodation and Support

- Provide accommodation at every stage—from application to onboarding and beyond.
- Continue to provide individualized emergency response plans as part of our accommodation process.
- Provided alternative formats for municipal documents upon request to accommodate visual or cognitive disabilities.

### Communication and Inclusion

- Ensuring employees and job applicants are informed about available resources and accommodation options

- Continue to consider the needs of employees with disabilities in performance reviews, career development, and advancement.
- Expanded mental health resources to support emotional well-being.

## Technology and Accessibility

- Continue to review and improve accessible templates for job postings, descriptions, and policies.
- Began work on a Human Resources Information System (HRIS), targeted for launch in 2025, to improve accessible access to employment-related information and services.

Our goal is simple: to create a workplace where every person has the opportunity to thrive.

## Training

The Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville is committed to building an inclusive and accessible workplace. All employees and volunteers receive training on accessibility standards and the Ontario Human Rights Code. Vendors who provide services on behalf of the Town are also required to confirm they have completed accessibility awareness training.

In 2024, the Town continued to support an inclusive workplace by offering a range of refresher and specialized training, including:

- **Anti-Harassment and Discrimination training** to promote respect and fairness
- **Inclusive Leadership training** to help leaders support diverse teams
- **Wellness Lunch and Learn sessions** focused on mental health and well-being
- **De-escalation training for frontline staff** to support safe and respectful interactions
- **Enhanced evacuation training** to help ensure safe emergency planning for people with accommodation needs

These training efforts help create a safe, respectful, and welcoming environment for employees, volunteers, and the community.

## Accessible Information and Communication

The Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville is committed to making information easy to find, understand, and access for everyone. We use a variety of tools and formats to better serve our community and ensure accessibility for all.

In 2024, we took important steps to improve how we share information:

### Website and Digital Content

- Continued to ensure all new website content meets or exceeds AODA accessibility standards before being published

- Regularly reviewed and updated the website to identify and fix accessibility issues

## Feedback and Continuous Improvement

- Continued to offer multiple ways for residents to provide feedback, allowing people to choose the option that works best for them
- Regularly reviewed best practices to improve accessibility in information, communication, and technology

## Council and Committee Meetings (eSCRIBE – launching 2025)

The Town is in the process of integrating **eSCRIBE** for Council and committee agendas and minutes, with launch planned for 2025. This system will improve accessibility:

- Meets WCAG 2.0/2.1 Level AA standards and supporting screen readers
- Allowing full keyboard navigation for users who cannot use a mouse
- Integrating with virtual meeting tools to support live streaming, captions, and recordings
- Using clear, consistent layouts that make information easier to navigate for users with cognitive or learning disabilities
- Supporting accessible PDFs and documents when uploaded in accessible formats

## Online Services (CityView)

The Town launched **CityView**, a land management and permitting system designed to make services easier to access for everyone, accessibility features include:

- Meets web accessibility standards in line with AODA and WCAG requirements
- Works with screen readers for users who are blind or have low vision
- Supports keyboard-only navigation
- Uses clear layouts and consistent navigation
- Offers accessible online forms, reducing the need for in-person visits
- Provides 24/7 digital access so users can complete tasks at their own pace

When paired with accessible document formats and staff support, CityView helps remove barriers and improve access to Town services for residents, businesses, and visitors.

## Forms and Transactions

- Completed the **Form Revitalization Project**, moving external-facing PDF forms to the Form Builder platform to improve accessibility, streamline processes, and enable integrated payment options

These efforts help ensure Town information and services are **inclusive, accessible, and responsive to the needs of our community**.

## Accessible Procurement Practices

The Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville is committed to making sure the goods, services, and facilities we purchase are accessible to everyone. Accessibility is an important part of our purchasing process, and we regularly review our practices to reflect current standards and new technologies.

In 2024, the Town improved accessible procurement by:

- Continue working with the York Purchasing Co-operative to promote best practices for buying accessible goods, services, and facilities
- Maintained tools and resources to help staff meet accessibility requirements, including training, templates, and guidelines
- Including accessibility design features when purchasing goods, services, or facilities, and documenting any exceptions

These efforts help ensure accessibility is considered at every stage of procurement and support a fair and inclusive community.

## Accessible Customer Service for Everyone

The Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville is committed to delivering excellent customer service that is accessible to all. Our goal is to ensure every community member receives goods, services, and programs of the same quality, within the same timelines, and with equal benefits.

All employees, volunteers, and service providers are trained to serve the public with **respect, dignity, and sensitivity** to individual needs and abilities.

In 2024, we continued to strengthen accessibility in customer service by continuing to:

- **Receiving and responding to feedback** in formats that are accessible to people with disabilities.
- **Offer adapted and inclusive community programs**, including:
  - Reduced-ratio programs (e.g., 1-to-1 support when needed)
  - Inclusion-specific programming
  - Partnerships with **Community Living York South**, supporting people with disabilities to live, learn, work, and participate in the community
  - Partnerships with **Able Network**, providing inclusive opportunities for young adults with intellectual disabilities
- **Providing subsidies** to reduce financial barriers for recreation and heritage programs.
- Introduced **free translation services** in over 240 languages, available through Town staff in person or by phone, improving access for newcomers and non-English speakers.
- Preparing to launch additional translation service in 2025 (including: sign language and virtual live translation)

These initiatives help ensure that **everyone in our community can fully participate in Town programs and services.**

## 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.

### Curbside Service

The Library continues to offer curbside service for patrons who are unable to enter the building, including individuals with mobility limitations, health-related concerns, or those seeking to reduce exposure for immunocompromised family members.

### Digital Content and Resources

The Library continues to expand its digital collections and provides equitable access to recreational equipment, including bicycles and sporting equipment. Accessible materials remain a priority and include large-print collections, eBooks, eAudiobooks through CELA, and eMagazines.

New and enhanced digital resources include:

- **ChiltonLibrary:** An online automotive repair database offering up-to-date service and maintenance information for a wide range of vehicles. Features include step-by-step repair instructions, troubleshooting guides, diagnostic codes, diagrams, photos, and instructional videos.
- **Digital Human Library – Virtual Tours and Virtual Reality:** Provides access to over 1,800 curated virtual tours and virtual reality experiences, including 360° panoramas, live cameras, and pre-recorded tours. Content is accessible on any device and browser without specialized hardware.
- **Fiero Code:** A learn-to-code platform supporting both in-person and self-guided learning. No prior coding experience is required, and unlimited online training enables code clubs, camps, workshops, and bootcamps.

### Adaptive Technology

The Library offers an Adaptive Technology Workstation equipped with:

- **ZoomText**, a screen magnification tool;
- **JAWS**, a screen-reading application;
- **Kurzweil 1000 and 3000**, software that supports scanning, reading, writing, and learning by converting text to speech.

## Accessible Website

In 2024, the Library enhanced its website to improve accessibility. The site now includes the UserWay accessibility tool, supporting WCAG 2.1 compliance and offering an AI-powered widget that enables customized user experiences. Features include keyboard navigation, smart contrast, built-in screen reading, dyslexia-friendly fonts, animation controls, and more.

## Ongoing Accessibility Commitments

The Library continues to:

- Develop guidelines and training to support the creation of accessible documents;
- Procure accessible materials, including large-print, audiobooks, braille, and digital content;
- Offer adjustable eBook settings for text size and typeface;
- Review and update its Customer Service and Accessibility Policy to promote a respectful and inclusive environment;
- Ensure services, collections, programs, and staffing reflect community diversity and reduce systemic barriers;
- Maintain accessibility and inclusion as core principles of its 2024 rebranding initiative;
- Expand assistive devices and sensory-friendly resources to support diverse learning needs.

## Neurodiversity and Sensory Supports

In 2024, the Library expanded its Sensory Collection to support neurodiverse users, including individuals with Autism, ADHD, Dyslexia, and other sensory processing needs. Initiatives include:

- Sensory kits developed in collaboration with For Little Monkeys Charity and supported by the Whitchurch-Stouffville Legacy Fund;
- A decodable book collection for early literacy, funded through a Dyslexia Grant;
- Sensory-friendly programming delivered in partnership with Autism in Mind (AIM), EarlyON, and Idea Lab Kids.
- Continued to expand sensory Collection for Neurodiverse Users launched in 2024 to support children with Autism, ADHD, Dyslexia, and other sensory needs. Includes specialized resources for developmental support.
  - Introduced decodable book collection for early literacy (funded by Dyslexia Grant).
  - Offered sensory-friendly programming in collaboration with Autism in Mind (AIM), EarlyON, and Idea Lab Kids.

## 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 Transit

Public Transit Public Transit falls under the authority of the York Region. Accessibility services provided by York Region Public Transit include York Region's Mobility On-Request, Paratransit system, Accessible Fleet and Stops and more. Visit their [website](#) to review services available.

### GO Transit

GO Transit connects Stouffville to the Greater Toronto Area and offers accessible trains, buses, stations, and customer services. Additional information on accessible features is available through [GO Transit](#).

### Accessible Taxicabs

Through the taxicab licensing and renewal process, the Town monitors fare tariffs and ensures that licensed operators:

- Do not charge higher fares or additional fees to persons with disabilities;
- Do not charge fees for the storage of mobility aids or assistive devices;
- Display vehicle registration and identification information clearly and provide this information in accessible formats upon request.

The Town continues to encourage taxicab operators to add accessible vehicles to the local fleet.

### Accessible Walkways and Roads

The Town continues to invest in and maintain walkways and roadways to enhance safety, mobility, and accessibility by:

- Conducting regular sidewalk inspections and maintenance to address mobility barriers such as cracks, trip hazards, and surface damage;
- Clearing snow and sanding sidewalks within 24 hours following the end of snowfall to support safe pedestrian travel;
- Providing an online "Track the Town's Snowplow" tool that allows residents to monitor snow-clearing progress in real time, supporting access to on-street parking and reducing walking distances to essential services.

### Continuous improvements:

- Annual meetings with York Region Transit to review transit priorities;
- Relocation of overhead utilities to support the construction of unobstructed multi-use pathways;



- Implementation of additional traffic-calming measures and pedestrian crossovers to improve active transportation safety.

## York Region Accessibility Initiatives in Stouffville:

Examples of regional accessibility improvements include:

- Installation of Accessible Pedestrian Signals (APS) with all new traffic signals and during replacement of existing signals;
- Installation of tactile walking surface indicators at all corners during road rehabilitation projects;
- Installation of pedestrian crossovers (PXOs) equipped with signage, overhead flashing beacons, pedestrian push buttons, tactile plates, crosswalk markings, street lighting, and pavement markings to improve pedestrian safety and accessibility.

## Windrow Clearing

The Town provides windrow snow-clearing services at no cost to seniors and residents with physical disabilities who do not have an able-bodied person living in the household. Windrows are snowbanks left across driveways by snowplows. Additional information is available at [townofws.ca/windrows](http://townofws.ca/windrows).

## Built Environment and Public Spaces

The Town is committed to fostering an equitable and inclusive community by integrating accessibility features into the design of new facilities and the renewal and rehabilitation of existing infrastructure. Inclusive design ensures that amenities and services are accessible to all individuals, regardless of age or physical or cognitive ability. Over the past year, Town staff have continued to maintain and enhance public spaces to provide barrier-free access for all community members.

## Recreation and Facilities

The Town continues to make progress in improving access to recreation and community programming through accessible facility design and the provision of appropriate programming and equipment for people with all abilities to enjoy. Accessible public spaces include specific features that make it easier for everyone, including people with disabilities, to use public spaces. The Town continues to prioritize retrofitting existing built environment barriers at facilities under the Town's management, while also minimizing barriers in all new construction and development projects to ensure compliance with Ontario Building Code and Accessibility for Ontarians with Disability Act. The Town continues to strive to proactively increase the accessibility of our facilities, public spaces, and workspaces

The Town provides accessible spaces throughout the community by implementing the following initiatives:

- Installed multiple sit and stand desk/tabletops to allow for multi-functional workspaces to meeting varying ergonomic and accessible needs

- Continued to replace push accessible buttons (sample of facilities completed in Operations Centre, Latcham, Stouffville Arena and more) with wave button sensors with a plan to complete the balance of our buildings.
- Maintain accessible elements in public spaces through monitoring and regularly planned preventative maintenance
- Quick Response to temporary disruptions when accessible elements in public spaces are not working order by notifying the public and prioritizing remediation.
- Prioritize and retrofit existing built environment barriers at recreational trails, outdoor public use eating areas, outdoor play spaces, exterior paths of travel, accessible parking, and facilities.
- 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.
- Ensure that the play facilities and other park amenities are welcoming. Included accessible features such as swings, accessibility points at multiple parks to ensure that play facilities and other park amenities are welcoming to all persons.
- Town has completed construction on an accessible skate trail with additional barrier free washrooms and change areas at memorial Park.
- Stouffville is recognized as a top destination for inclusive outdoor experiences, offering 3 of 4 fully accessible trails in York Region:
  - Hall Tract – Features: Wheelchair-accessible forested path, smooth surface, parking available.
  - Hollidge Tract – Features: Fully accessible with EV charging stations, level compacted paths, benches for resting, suitable for wagons/strollers and wheelchairs
  - North Tract – Features: Gently graded, packed gravel surface, accessible parking, clear trail signage
- Interactive Trail Guide: available through the [Town's website](#) for planning accessible routes.

## Parks Initiatives

Town working on design of new park 401 Baker Hill Play Site and redevelopment of Aspen Parkette.

### *401 Baker Hill Play Site*

- The playground will feature dedicated structures for both junior and senior age groups, with accessible play components that encourage interactive, play-based experiences for children of all abilities.
- Accessibility features include partially ramped play structures, mobility aids, sensory-rich play panels, the Rock N Raft, a roller table, and ground-level activities. The playground's engineered wood fibre surface is IPEMA certified and compliant with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).

### *Aspen Parkette*

Aspen Parkette (revitalization) the revitalization project includes elements that support accessibility and inclusive use:

- **Pedestrian pathways** designed as part of the park upgrades, which help make the space more accessible for people of all abilities (e.g., walkers, wheelchairs).
- **Open green space and seating areas**, which provide resting spots and flexible play areas suitable for a range of users.
- **Playground equipment and design improvements** are planned with community input, includes consideration of accessibility for children of different abilities