



East Gwillimbury

Town of East Gwillimbury Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2023-2027

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MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR



From left to right: Councillor Terry Foster, Councillor Loreale Carruthers, Councillor Susan Lahey, Mayor Virginia Hackson, Councillor Scott Crone, Councillor Tara Roy-DiClemente, Councillor Brian Johns

We are pleased to present East Gwillimbury's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, which is an important part of our planning process and will guide our journey towards building a stronger more inclusive community. This Plan outlines Council's commitment to creating a barrier free community where we are committed to ensuring everyone can participate.

As part of the preparation process for this document, the Town conducted public outreach which generated feedback from residents, helping us to understand what EG is doing well, what barriers exist and providing recommendations on how we can improve accessibility in East Gwillimbury. This plan was also shared with the Accessibility Advisory Committee of Council for their review and feedback. Council always appreciates receiving public input on important initiatives and the comments and feedback received have been reflected in this Plan.

As Canada's fastest growing municipality (based on 2021 Census data), we must continue to listen to our community and ensure we respond to our community needs to help us thrive. The Multi-Year Accessibility Plan will be reviewed regularly to ensure we are keeping current in our journey to be an accessible, welcoming community that embraces equity, diversity, and inclusion.

ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE OF COUNCIL

The Town of East Gwillimbury is proudly committed to promoting equal opportunity and access for all citizens with disabilities to participate in a universally accessible community.

The Accessibility Advisory Committee of Council must consist of a minimum of five members, a majority of whom persons with a disability as defined by the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).

The Committee's objectives are as follows:

- Review and provide advice to Council regarding the development, updating and compliance of the Town's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.
- Advise Council on accessibility issues for those building the Town purchases, constructs, significantly renovates, or leases.
- Review site plans as outlined in Section 29 of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, S.O. 2005, c.11 (AODA)
- Identify and document relevant issues and concerns as they relate to universal accessibility.
- Promote public awareness and sensitivity with respect to issues affecting persons with disabilities.
- Liaise and communicate with the York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee.

Regular meetings are held on the last Wednesday of each month at 7:30 p.m. between the following months:

- January to June
- September to November

EAST GWILLIMBURY AT A GLANCE

As Canada's fastest growing municipality (based on 2021 census data), the Town of East Gwillimbury (EG) is located just 30 minutes north of Toronto along Highway 404 and the future 400-404 corridor link in northern York Region. In addition to its close proximity to Highway 404, the Town is served by York Regional Transit and GO Transit.

Encompassing an area of 238 square kilometres, the Town consists of several growing urban areas and villages including, Holland Landing, Queensville, Mount Albert, River Drive Park, and Sharon.

EG is a premier centre for growth within the GTA. The current population is 37,665 and is projected to reach 50,000 by 2025.

East Gwillimbury's Municipal Council is comprised of the Mayor and six Councillors. The Mayor is elected at large and Councillors each represent a ward of the community.

INTRODUCTION

Statement of Commitment

East Gwillimbury is committed to providing equitable treatment to persons with disabilities with respect to the use and benefit of Town programs, services and facilities. The Town seeks to identify and remove barriers to accessibility and prevent the creation of new barriers. The Town is working to provide services in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of all East Gwillimbury citizens, its employees, and visitors. The Town of East Gwillimbury is equally dedicated to ensuring that all legislated obligations under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA, 2005) and the Ontario Human Rights Code are met in a timely manner and that compliance is maintained.

Background

Creating a barrier free community where everyone has an equal opportunity to participate is important for all people, businesses, and the community.

In accordance with the AODA, East Gwillimbury developed this Multi-Year Accessibility Plan to demonstrate how the Town is implementing the legislative requirements of the AODA and to manage compliance with emerging AODA regulations related to the Corporation.

The Town recognizes that there is also a need for innovation outside of the legislation, and remains dedicated to ensuring that it meets, and when possible, exceeds, the compliance standards and legislated responsibilities to meet residents' accessibility needs.

The Town also recognizes that achieving these objectives requires a corporate-wide approach to identify, remove, and prevent barriers for residents, employees, and visitors.

Identification of Barriers

Effective identification of barriers to accessibility is an important first step in their removal and is crucial to ensuring new barriers are not created along the way. When identifying barriers, assessments will involve evaluation of all possible forms, including:

Barrier Type	Description
Attitudinal	Behaviours, perceptions, and assumptions that discriminate against persons with disabilities.
Physical or Architectural	Occurs in the built environment and often prevents access for persons with disabilities.

Barrier Type	Description
Systematic	Organizational barriers, often policies or procedures, that unfairly discriminate and possibly prevent persons with disabilities from full participating.
Technological	Occur when technology or the way it can be used, does not consider the needs of persons with disabilities.
Communication	Arise when consideration is not given to how persons with disabilities receive or send information, or when persons with disabilities cannot easily receive and/or understand information that is available to others.

THE PLAN

Accessibility Standards

The AODA sets out accessibility standards for private and public organizations to prevent and remove barriers for persons with disabilities. The following provides a brief description of each standard:

General Requirements: Outlines actions to enhance accessibility across an organization, including the creation and maintenance of a Multi-Year Plan.

Customer Service Standard: Outlines requirements for service providers to make their goods, services, and facilities accessible for customers or patrons with disabilities.

Information and Communications Standard: Requires organizations to create, provide, and receive information and communications in such a manner that is accessible to persons with disabilities.

Employment Standard: Requires employers to make their workplace and employment practices accessible to potential or current employees with disabilities.

Design of Public Spaces Standard: Outlines the need for certain newly constructed or redeveloped public spaces to be accessible for persons with disabilities.

Transportation Standard: Requires transportation service providers to make the features and equipment on routes and vehicles accessible to passengers with disabilities.

Under the AODA, East Gwillimbury must establish, review, and update a multi-year accessibility plan at least once every five years. The legislation also requires organizations to prepare annual status reports on actions taken to improve accessibility and to implement legislated requirements.

Accessibility Report Card

AODA Requirement	Compliance Date	Compliance Achieved
Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and policies established	January 1, 2010	✓
Accessible customer service	January 1, 2010	✓
Training	January 1, 2010	✓
Employment	January 1, 2012	✓
Accessible information	January 1, 2012	✓
Transportation (accessible taxis)	January 1, 2012	✓
Procurement and accessible purchases	January 1, 2013	✓
Design of public spaces	January 1, 2015	✓
Website and content WCAG 2.1 Level AA Compliant	May 2021	✓

Highlights of Achievements to Date

The following is a summary of the Town's achievements to date and reflect AODA required actions related to each standard that are already in place as a result of earlier efforts. The Town will continue to maintain compliance with the AODA standards and the requirements already in effect.

General Requirements

- ✓ Implemented and maintained a Multi-Year Accessibility Plan that outlines long-term strategies to achieve AODA requirements, as well as accessibility initiatives above and beyond the AODA to improve accessibility within programs, services, and Town facilities.
- ✓ Established internal accessibility policies which govern how the Town achieves and maintains compliance with the requirements of the AODA, including Accessible Customer Service.
- ✓ Updated the procurement by-law to include accessibility criteria for the procurement of goods, services, facilities, and self-service kiosks.
- ✓ Provided training to all employees, volunteers, and members of Council on the AODA Accessibility Standards and on the Human Rights Code as it pertains to persons with disabilities. Training is provided to new people when they come on-board.

Customer Service

- ✓ Accommodate the use of assistive devices, support persons, and service animals.
- ✓ Receive and respond to feedback regarding the manner in which goods or services are provided to persons with disabilities.
- ✓ Provide notice of temporary service disruptions to programs, services, or facilities.

Information and Communications

- ✓ Ensured East Gwillimbury websites are WCAG 2.1 Level AA compliant.
- ✓ Included a notice on the East Gwillimbury website about the availability and provision of alternative formats being available upon request.

Employment

- ✓ As an equal opportunity employer, the Town provides notice of the availability of accommodation for applicants with disabilities in its recruitment process.
- ✓ Ensure employees are aware, and informed of, available supports and accommodations. This would include consulting with employees to provide and arrange for accessible formats and communication supports where required and ensuring the needs of employees with disabilities are taken into account for the purposes of performance management, career development, advancement, and redeployment.
- ✓ Maintain a return-to-work process and provide individual documented accommodation plans for employees with disabilities where required.

Design of Public Spaces and the Built Environment

- ✓ Continue to ensure new or redeveloped public spaces comply with AODA design requirements as it relates to:
 - Trails, beach access routes and forest trails
 - Outdoor public eating areas
 - Public play spaces and accessible parking
 - Exterior paths of travel, including sidewalks and accessible pedestrian signals
 - Service counters, fixed queuing lines and waiting areas

Transportation

The Town does not provide public transportation services; however, it has taken the following actions as it relates to accessible taxicab services that operate within the Town.

- ✓ Ensure owners and operators of taxicabs do not charge a higher fare for persons with disabilities, nor charge for storage of mobility aids or assistive devices.
- ✓ Ensure taxicabs display vehicle registration and identification on rear bumpers of taxicabs, and that this information is available in an accessible format to passengers with disabilities.
- ✓ Consult with the Accessibility Advisory Committee and members of the public with disabilities to determine the proportion of on-demand accessible taxicabs required in the community.

ACCESSIBILITY GOALS AND INITIATIVES 2023-2027

To ensure continued success in creating a fully accessible community for East Gwillimbury residents, employees, and visitors, the Town has developed a list of goals and initiatives. This list includes improvements to Town practices and procedures currently in place, as well as future initiatives that go above and beyond the requirements of the AODA. It was created with information gathered from consulting persons with disabilities in East Gwillimbury, as well as input from East Gwillimbury employees and the Accessibility Advisory Committee to Council.

To track the progress of these goals and initiatives, the Town will create an Annual Accessibility Status Report. The report will be reviewed and updated regularly, and where necessary, will outline any public consultation or budget requirements.

1. General Requirements

- 1.1. Review and update procurement process to include requirements for AODA compliant goods, services, facilities
- 1.2. Review and update the Town's Accessibility Policy
- 1.3. Formalize process for bringing items to AAC for review/input

2. Customer Service

- 2.1. Review, and where necessary, make improvements to the Town's Notice of Temporary Disruption process
- 2.2. Review and update the Town's Accessible Customer Service policy

- 2.3. Formalize and communicate the Town's process for responding to feedback
- 2.4. Investigate opportunities to offer more recreation programs for persons with disabilities

3. Information and Communications

- 3.1. Create a corporate procedure for the creation of accessible documents
- 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
- 3.3. Enhance AODA training for website content managers and social media content creators
- 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)
- 3.5. Review and update the Town's process for responding to requests for alternative formats

4. Employment

- 4.1. Update and provide AODA related training to staff, Members of Council, and volunteers, as required
- 4.2. Review and update accommodation and return-to-work policies and procedures to ensure they reflect legislation and best practices

5. Design of Public Spaces and the Built Environment

- 5.1. Continue to ensure new or redeveloped public spaces comply with AODA and accessible design standards
- 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
- 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
- 5.4. Improve access to accessible washrooms near outdoor amenities such as sports fields, playgrounds, etc.

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

5.6. Integrate accessibility features into new parks and playground structures

6. Transportation

6.1. Review and, where necessary, update Taxi Licensing by-law to ensure it reflects current AODA requirements

6.2. Communicate and promote accessible transit options in East Gwillimbury

6.3. Where possible, liaise with York Region Transit to improve accessible transit within and around East Gwillimbury

FEEDBACK

The Town of East Gwillimbury encourages the public to submit feedback regarding this Multi-Year Accessibility Plan or any other accessibility matters in our community. Generating feedback is an important process that aids in identifying and removing barriers.

To request a copy of this plan in an alternative format or to send us your comments or questions, please contact us at:

The Town of East Gwillimbury

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Sharon, ON
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Phone: [905-478-4282](tel:905-478-4282)

Fax: 905-478-2808

Email: customerservice@eastgwillimbury.ca