



# **City of Markham**

## Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2025 - 2029

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## Message from the Mayor

Markham is proud to be known as one of Canada's most diverse communities. That's why it's so imperative that we make every effort to ensure that all residents feel included. For this reason, accessibility is a top priority for us. Recently, we partnered with an external consulting firm to conduct an accessibility assessment. This involved extensive engagement with our employees and community members. We listened to all feedback received from our community and took it to heart. This Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP) reflects our community's efforts and desires to be fully inclusive of all people, especially persons with disabilities.

We are proud of our accomplishments so far. We have made extensive efforts in recent years to remove barriers to accessibility in areas such as our City facilities, parks and voting platforms. We have added thousands of automatic door openers to our buildings and have identified many other opportunities to remove known barriers. We have a team of employees and councillors who champion the importance of accessibility. We also are proud of the role the Markham Accessibility Advisory Committee plays in sharing their experiences and expertise to advance accessibility within the community.

While we are making progress in becoming more accessible, we know there is still work to be done. Our Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP) shares successes we have had in making the City of Markham more accessible for persons with disabilities. It also highlights opportunities to continue our progress on removing barriers to accessibility. It outlines the steps we plan to take to improve accessibility at the City of Markham. The MYAP aligns with our strategic plan [Building Markham's Future Together](#) . Additionally, it expands on our goal of making our community the best place to live, invest, work and experience rich diversity.

We welcome feedback on this Plan. Together, we can continue to remove barriers to accessibility and create a community where everyone can thrive.

Sincerely,

[Insert Signature]

Frank Scarpitti  
Mayor of Markham





## Mayor & Members of Council

(Front Row L to R):

Ward 8 Councillor **Isa Lee**

Ward 6 Councillor **Amanda Yeung Collucci**

Ward 4 Councillor **Karen Rea**

Ward 7 Councillor **Juanita Nathan**

(Middle Row L to R):

Regional Councillor **Alan Ho**

Deputy Mayor **Michael Chan**

Mayor **Frank Scarpitti**

Regional Councillor **Jim Jones**

Regional Councillor **Joe Li**

(Back Row L to R):

Ward 1 Councillor **Keith Irish**

Ward 3 Councillor **Reid McAlpine**

Ward 5 Councillor **Andrew Keyes**

Ward 2 Councillor **Ritch Lau**

## Message from the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO)

As Chief Administrative Officer for the City of Markham, I am delighted to share our 2025-2029 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP). This plan reflects our commitment to creating an inclusive community where everyone, regardless of ability, has the opportunity to thrive.

Accessibility is a fundamental aspect of our vision for a vibrant, diverse, and engaged community. It is not only about compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), but about going beyond to foster a truly barrier-free environment. We have made significant progress in recent years, but we recognize that there is more to do.

The MYAP outlines our strategic approach for the next five years. It is shaped by the insights and lived experiences of our residents and employees with disabilities, as well as by valuable input from the Markham Accessibility Advisory Committee.

Our plan focuses on key areas including culture, communication, employment, transportation, public spaces, and customer service. It is a testament to our ongoing dedication to enhancing accessibility in all aspects of our City services and facilities. We are committed to ensuring Markham is a welcoming and inclusive city for all.

Thank you for your support and commitment as we work together to build a more accessible community.



Sincerely,

[Insert Signature]

Andy Taylor  
Chief Administrative Officer

## Message from the Chair of the Markham Accessibility Advisory Committee

The Markham Accessibility Advisory Committee (MAAC) is made up of knowledgeable and passionate individuals dedicated to making a difference to persons with disabilities. We share a commitment to advancing accessibility in our community. Many Committee Members have lived experience of disabilities. They bring with them a wealth of knowledge on disability-related barriers faced in the community and ways we can work together to become more accessible.

We are proud of the commitment City of Markham employees and community members demonstrated towards the development of our new Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP). The phrase “nothing about us without us” is a cornerstone of the disability community. This principle underlies the work of the Markham Accessibility Advisory Committee and the creation of the MYAP. Employees and community members that identify as having disabilities were heavily involved in the creation of this Plan. The experiences and ideas of persons with disabilities are at the forefront of the MYAP.

Special recognition is given to the following committee members for contributing to the MYAP development process: Alan Ho (Regional Councillor, Markham), Christina Lee, Jewell Lofsky (MAAC Vice Chair), Kim Adeney, Michelle Del Carmen (MAAC Past Chair), Ritch Lau (Ward 2 Councillor, Markham), Satya Arora, Stephanie Mak and Yoyo Chen (MAAC Vice Chair). A sincere thank you to our amazing staff liaison team: Dana Honsberger, Kinya Baker and Laura Gold. Their dedication in supporting MAAC has a direct positive impact on our contribution to the development of the MYAP and our participation at other City-led accessibility conversations.

The MYAP is a testament to our shared goal of removing barriers and creating a fully inclusive environment for those who live in or visit our community. The Committee had multiple opportunities to provide our input and thoughts on the MYAP development process and on drafts of the MYAP. We are confident that the City completed a fulsome assessment of accessibility and is making every effort to remove barriers to accessibility. We are excited to be a part of a community where accessibility for persons with disabilities is a real priority.



We encourage you to read through this MYAP and share your feedback. Your input is invaluable as we work together to create a more inclusive community. We believe that, with your support, we can achieve our goal of making our community more inclusive and accessible for all.

Thank you for your continued support and engagement.

Sincerely,  
Edward Lau



## Introduction

### About the City of Markham

Markham is one of Canada's most diverse cities. We are proud of our rich history and our diversity. Diversity is our collective strength and drives our community's vibrancy, success, and innovation. We have a rich cultural heritage, outstanding community planning services, and a vibrant local environment. More than 357,000 people call Markham home. So do hundreds of corporate head offices and more than one thousand high tech and life science companies.

The City of Markham recognizes that diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility are integral and valuable to the municipality's success and are key strategic priorities. These principles are embedded in our strategic plan [Building Markham's Future Together](#).

We understand that diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility look different for everyone. The City of Markham strives to create a workplace and community where everyone feels welcome, has a sense of belonging, and can live the best life possible.

### City of Markham Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge the traditional territories of Indigenous peoples and their commitment to stewardship of the land. We acknowledge the communities in circle. The North, West, South and Eastern directions, and Haudenosaunee, Huron- Wendat, Anishnabeg, Seneca, Chippewa, and the Mississaugas of the Credit peoples. We share the responsibility with the caretakers of this land to ensure the dish is never empty and to restore relationships that are based on peace, friendship, and trust. We are committed to reconciliation, partnership and enhanced understanding.

### About the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)

The [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act](#) (AODA) became law in 2005. The goal of the legislation is to make Ontario fully accessible for persons with disabilities by identifying, removing, and preventing barriers. This law applies to government, businesses, non-profit and public sector organizations in Ontario, with requirements varying based on the size and type of the organization. As a minimum, the City of Markham must comply with all applicable requirements in the AODA.

The [Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation](#) (IASR) sets standards under the AODA, with requirements in key areas:



- **General Requirements:** Obligated organizations must create accessibility policies and multi-year plans, procure or acquire accessible goods, services, or facilities. They must provide training on the IASR and the Ontario Human Rights Code as it pertains to persons with disabilities. Organizations must also ensure self-service kiosks are accessible.
- **Information and Communication:** Organizations must make their information accessible to persons with disabilities. This includes providing accessible formats and communication supports upon request.
- **Employment:** Organizations are required to implement accessible hiring practices and workplace accommodations.
- **Transportation:** Public transportation services must be made accessible.
- **Design of Public Spaces:** New and redeveloped outdoor public spaces must be made accessible and maintained.
- **Customer Service:** This involves removing barriers for persons with disabilities so that they can access goods, services and facilities. This includes developing accessible customer service policies and training staff.

The City of Markham must have a Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP) outlining our strategy to meet these accessibility standards and requirements. We must identify, prevent, and remove barriers across our programs, services, and facilities. This plan must be updated at least once every five years. Additionally, organizations are required to prepare annual status reports to track their progress. The accessibility plan and the annual status reports must be posted publicly. Accessible formats must be made available upon request. You can find the City of Markham's Accessibility site at [Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility](#).

Furthermore, organizations must have an accessibility policy and customer service policy in place. The accessibility policy must include the organization's commitment to accessibility. You can refer to the [City of Markham's Commitment to Accessibility](#).

This MYAP is designed to meet all compliance requirements related to the AODA. It reflects how the City is meeting the requirements for a barrier-free Markham and opportunities to go beyond the minimum standards.



## The Markham Accessibility Advisory Committee

The AODA requires municipalities in Ontario with 10,000 or more residents to form an Accessibility Advisory Committee. Our committee members are appointed by City Council. By law, the majority of members must be persons with disabilities. The goal of the committee is to advise Council about accessibility standards, accessibility reports, accessibility issues relating to site plans, and other matters as requested by Council. The Committee assists staff to identify and remove barriers to accessibility for persons with disabilities. They share their experiences, informed by lived experiences where possible, to help make things more accessible. This helps improve the social, cultural, and economic well-being of people with disabilities. The Committee also advocates for accessibility in the community and acts as a key link between the community and the City of Markham.



### Members of the Markham Accessibility Advisory Committee

Back (L to R): Stephanie Mak, Christina Lee, Kim Adeney, Councillor Ritch Lau

Front (L to R): Yoyo Chen, Ed Lau, Satya Arora

Not pictured: Jewell Lofsky, Regional Councillor Alan Ho



## **The City of Markham's Statement of Commitment**

Markham is committed to ensuring all residents have full and equal access to its programs, services, facilities and information. Accessibility makes it possible for people of all abilities to take advantage of everything Markham has to offer.

The City of Markham is committed to making its programs, services and facilities accessible to people with disabilities in compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), 2005 and the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001.

The City takes its obligations under the AODA seriously and commits to meeting the requirements to ensure that City programs, services, and facilities are accessible to all.

## **Accessibility Plan Development Process**

The City of Markham partnered with a consultant in the creation of our multi-year accessibility plan (MYAP), which outlines the initiatives the City will take in the next five years to meet, and sometimes exceed, the requirements of the AODA.

Before creating the MYAP, we reached out to employees, community members, persons with disabilities, allies, and others at the City of Markham. We invited all employees to provide their thoughts on accessibility by completing an anonymous survey. We also reviewed feedback from community members gathered through a survey shared via various accessible methods, community survey results are included as Appendix A.

The draft initiatives in this MYAP were shared with our Markham Accessibility Advisory Committee and our Inclusion Survey Advisory Committee, who provided their thoughts and opinions. Their feedback, along with insights from persons with disabilities, was instrumental in shaping our Accessibility MYAP and guiding our key initiatives over the next five years.

The consultant has extensive knowledge of accessibility. Their team also has lived experience of disability. The consultant conducted a fulsome accessibility assessment of the City of Markham. This involved:

- Reviewing employee feedback related to accessibility.
- Thoroughly reviewing the City's strategic plans to assess the alignment with accessibility and ensure the meaningful inclusion of persons with disabilities.
- Interviewing key members of the teams responsible for the various sections within the AODA.
- Facilitating three focus group sessions with the Markham's Accessibility Advisory Committee, along with an interview with the Chair of the MAAC.



- Consulting with persons with disabilities and allies at the City of Markham through the use of an anonymous questionnaire to collect input.
- Consulting with members of the public through a community survey. The survey was posted on social media sites and the City of Markham website. Additionally, it was shared through newsletters and at City of Markham locations.

This accessibility assessment identified opportunities to remove barriers to accessibility at the City of Markham. It helped shape the initiatives outlined in this plan.

## **Achieve an Accessible Markham**

The City wants to continue to foster an inclusive culture where accessibility is embedded into all aspects of civic life, ensuring that all residents, employees, and visitors feel valued, respected, and empowered to participate fully.

To continue to achieve an accessible and inclusive Markham, the City wants to achieve the following objectives:

### **An inclusive and accessible Markham**

Markham will foster an inclusive culture where accessibility is embedded into all aspects of civic life, so that all residents, employees, and visitors feel valued, respected, and empowered to participate fully.

### **Accessibility is everyone's responsibility**

We will continuously improve accessibility, set goals, monitor and report on our progress.

### **Accessibility is part of our work**

Tapping into Markham's innovative culture, our staff understand what needs to be done and are supported and empowered to embed accessibility in the work we do every day.



## How this Plan is Organized

This plan outlines the accessibility standards and requirements from the AODA and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) that the City of Markham will follow over the next five years. We have also included a section on Inclusive Culture which, while not an official standard or requirement, is included to reflect the feedback we heard from our employees and community as well as best practices in accessibility and inclusion.

The plan covers the following:

1. Inclusive Culture
2. General
3. Information and Communication
4. Employment
5. Transportation
6. The Design of Public Spaces
7. Customer Service

Each section is broken down into these sections:

- **Our Recent Efforts:** Highlights of our recent work to improve accessibility.
- **Opportunities:** Identifies opportunities to remove barriers to improve accessibility found through consultations with City staff, the community, and our Markham Accessibility Advisory Committee.
- **Key Initiatives:** Outlines our planned steps to achieve success in the next five years. These actions will guide our yearly status reports, which will be shared on our website.

### 1. Creating an Inclusive Culture

The City of Markham is committed to building a strong foundation that ensures accessibility for all community members. While the AODA sets important standards, we believe that fostering an inclusive culture is crucial for truly embedding accessibility into our everyday work. Through various consultations, including one-on-one meetings, a staff questionnaire, community survey, and discussions with the Markham Accessibility Advisory Committee (MAAC), we've identified a gap in how accessibility is currently perceived and prioritized within the organization.

Employees and community members have shared that advancing accessibility at the City of Markham requires more than just compliance. It needs to be integrated into our daily practices and mindset. We heard that to make real progress, accessibility can't be treated as an 'extra' task. It requires dedicated resources, budget, and ongoing focus. Further, there is a real need for increased awareness and additional training. We need to emphasize that accessibility goes beyond physical barriers and includes a wide range of disabilities, both visible and non-visible.



By making an accessible and inclusive culture a priority in our Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP), we aim to cultivate an environment where inclusivity is a part of everything we do. This includes celebrating the diversity of our community, promoting continuous learning, and encouraging everyone to contribute to our accessibility initiatives. A strong, inclusive culture will ensure that our efforts to remove barriers are effective and sustainable. It will make accessibility an important part of our organization's values and daily operations.

## Our Recent Efforts

- The City of Markham has added an Accessibility Specialist to our staff complement. This position is responsible for implementing, monitoring and reporting on this plan and to ensure we continue meeting all requirements of the AODA.
- Our Markham Accessibility Advisory Committee is composed of passionate and forward-thinking individuals. The Committee actively participated in the development and consultation of the 2025 -2029 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.
- Accessibility and inclusivity are at the heart of our city's vision for the future. This is reflected in our Strategic Plan "[Building Markham's Future Together](#)" and the [Diversity Action Plan](#).

## Opportunities

- There is a growing recognition of the need to expand our focus beyond visible or physical disabilities to include a more comprehensive understanding of invisible or non-apparent disabilities. Additionally, there is an opportunity to enhance our efforts in mental health awareness, training, and support.
- The 2025 -2029 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan provides the opportunity to align the MAAC roles and responsibilities efforts with the City's goals enhancing its impact within the framework set out by the AODA.
- There are opportunities for the City to increase public education and awareness regarding accessibility for persons with disabilities.
- The City recognizes the need to undertake a variety of accessibility initiatives to ensure sustained and impactful progress in this area.

## Key Initiatives

- We will evaluate and develop a plan for accessibility improvements and initiatives.



- The City and the Markham Accessibility Advisory Committee will work together to ensure they remain effective, well-coordinated, and continue to be in alignment with the AODA mandate and the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.
- The City will support initiatives to raise awareness and educate both employees and the community on accessibility, including opportunities to recognize National Accessibility Awareness Week, International Day of Persons with Disabilities, and National Disability Employment Awareness Month. The City will also seek opportunities to collaborate with other municipalities and organizations when possible.

## 2. General Requirements

The general requirements of the AODA consist of the establishment of accessibility policies and plans, along with related training. It also includes direction for acquiring goods, services, or facilities as well as related mandatory training requirements.

### Our Recent Efforts

- We engaged an external consultancy firm to conduct a comprehensive assessment and update the MYAP by the end of 2024.
- We complete annual AODA status reports that are available on our website.
- We provide documents in alternative formats upon request.
- We provide mandatory AODA training to all new and existing employees and volunteers.
- We require contractors who provide goods, services, or facilities on behalf of the City to complete training on the AODA.
- We use an accessible e-procurement system that meets Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 AA.

### Opportunities

- There is an opportunity to review and update our policies that govern how the organization achieves or will achieve accessibility through meeting the AODA requirements.
- There is an opportunity to review and revise our procurement process to support staff with an accessibility procurement guideline document.

## Key Initiatives

- The City will continue to monitor its compliance with the AODA and post annual status reports publicly on our website.
- The City will regularly review our policies that govern how the organization achieves or will achieve accessibility through meeting the AODA requirements. We will ensure they are accurate and fully reflect the needs of our community members.
- We will review our current procurement processes to ensure that the City's programs, services, and facilities are accessible.

## 3. Information and Communication

Information and Communication relates to how we communicate with our employees and the public. This includes hardware, software, systems, assistive devices, and all other aspects of communication and technology. We have a process for receiving community feedback and for providing alternate communication formats, we continually review the external website for accessibility, and we also review emergency procedures on a regular basis. The City remains committed to ensuring all web content is accessible or available in alternate formats.

### Our Recent Efforts

- We have significantly updated our website and included accessible features like high contrast mode and a digital accessibility page.
- We are updating our brand and corporate style guidelines. We are creating new document templates to ensure all materials are accessible.
- Our Elections micro-website and online voting system are accessible, with free downloadable software available for additional assistance. The platforms were audited to ensure they meet accessibility standards.

### Opportunities

- Although the City provides various templates and resources to our employees for internal and external communication, we currently do not include guidance on creating accessible communications. There is an opportunity to review and enhance our public announcements to communicate emergency response procedures to community members with disabilities.



## Key Initiatives

- We will ensure employees have clear processes in place for when someone requests information in alternate formats.
- The City will develop a plan to ensure that all information from our website can be provided in alternate formats in a timely manner, as requested.
- The City will review and assess our internal and external communication procedures and develop a guideline for accessible communications.
- We will offer additional training and tools to our staff that develop communications.
- The City will continue to review and update our procedures for communicating emergency responses to reach the community members with disabilities.

## 4. Employment

Employment covers an employee's entire experience at the City of Markham. It starts from the recruitment and onboarding process and ends when the individual leaves the organization. It also includes accommodation planning for employees who have been absent from work due to a disability. We have established procedures for accessible recruitment, assessment, and selection processes. We offer and provide accommodation for job applicants when requested and notify successful job applicants of our policies for accommodating employees with disabilities. Employees are provided accessible formats and individual accommodation plans as needed. The City has emergency response protocols and return-to-work processes in place. Performance management, career development, and redeployment are supported by practices designed to ensure equal access and opportunities for all employees.

## Our Recent Efforts

- All employees complete the mandatory AODA training. Participation is tracked to ensure everyone completes the training.
- Candidates are offered accommodation options during recruitment, onboarding and are available if the need arises anytime during their employment with the City.
- Managers receive bias-free recruitment training.
- We have well-defined HR policies and procedures in place to support our employees throughout their time as an employee.
- A Staff identity and Inclusion Survey was completed in October 2024. The results of this survey will inform future changes to policies and procedures.



## Opportunities

- While we currently provide accessibility training that meets AODA requirements, there is an opportunity to expand AODA training and offering it more frequently to ensure accessibility remains a priority for everyone and our employees are always up to date on best practices.
- We recognize the need to collect more detailed and ongoing feedback from our employees about accessibility within the workplace. This will help us better understand the challenges they face and make informed decisions on how to improve our practices.
- We can review our recruitment programs to identify supports required in the workplace to support persons with disabilities to help us create a more inclusive workforce.

## Key Initiatives

- We will review the outcome of our Staff identity and Inclusion Survey and develop goals and strategies to ensure an inclusive environment.
- We will continue to update our accessibility training to ensure it is fully accessible and regularly provided to all employees.
- We will offer additional training for managers and senior managers. This will equip them with the skills to effectively support employees with various disabilities.
- We will review our recruitment programs to ensure they are accessible for persons with disabilities.
- We will continue to strive to develop an inclusive culture of accessibility within our employees.

## 5. Transportation

We are committed to ensuring that persons with disabilities have access to reliable and accessible taxicabs. The City of Markham's obligations under the AODA are limited to accessible taxi services.

### Our Recent Efforts

- The City has had an accessible taxi policy since 2016. This policy aligns with AODA requirements.
- Given the challenges the entire province is facing in obtaining accessible taxi services, the City has been actively monitoring solutions and best practices implemented by other municipalities.

## Opportunities

- There is an opportunity to continue to work with taxicab providers to address challenges such as long wait times, limited accessible stops, and complex routes that contribute to mobility barriers for persons with disabilities.

## Key Initiatives

- We will continue to receive and monitor feedback from persons with disabilities about accessible taxicabs.
- We will continue to work proactively with taxi companies, other municipalities, government agencies, and service providers to ensure compliance with AODA requirements of accessible taxicabs. We will collaborate, learn from best practices, and innovate to improve accessible services.
- During the pandemic, we observed a shift in how accessible services are provided. More people are opting for private arrangements to meet their specific needs. We plan to engage with the private providers to ensure they understand and comply with AODA regulations and know the necessary licensing requirements for operating within the City.

## 6. The Design of Public Spaces

The Design of Public Spaces refers to the requirements for making public spaces accessible for persons with disabilities. Some key areas covered under the design of public spaces include recreational trails, outdoor public use eating areas, outdoor play spaces, exterior paths of travel, and accessible off-street parking. It also includes service counters, fixed queuing guides, and waiting areas as well as the procedures for the maintenance and communicating disruptions to the accessible elements in public spaces.

## Our Recent Efforts

- We continually work to meet all accessibility requirements under the Building Code and the Integrated Accessibility Standards when building and improving our public spaces.
- City staff consult with the Markham Accessibility Advisory Committee for the review of site plans and drawings.

- Our Parks Team regularly holds public open houses to gather input on new park developments and consults with the Markham Accessibility Advisory Committee.
- Our Urban Design Team has developed age-friendly guidelines to support developers, designers and city staff in development application reviews.
- We are in the process of a four-year project to refurbish 105 existing playgrounds to include AODA requirements. Some improvements include the removal of sand, changes to curbing and the first wheelchair-accessible swing has been installed. All new parks are now designed to include AODA requirements.
- Approximately 6,000 touchless sensors have been installed on doors, faucets, soap dispensers, hand dryers, and toilets across City facilities since the COVID-19 pandemic, improving health & safety and accessibility.
- Our swimming centres have accessible change rooms and most have additional features such as pool ramps, water wheelchairs or pool lifts.
- The Civic Centre’s Council Chamber has recently been updated with accessible features that include the addition of new handrails and high contrast flooring on the stairs.
- We now have a Markham Accessibility Advisory Committee representative on the Cycling and Pedestrian Advisory Committee to offer an accessibility lens to their work.
- We routinely notify the public and prioritize repairs when city-owned accessible elements in public spaces are not in working order.

## Opportunities

- While the City meets required accessibility standards, there is an opportunity to strive for a higher level of accessibility in all projects.
- Auditing, upgrading, and constructing accessible spaces will be prioritized to maintain progress. It's important to ensure that accessibility is designed for from the start and prioritized to maintain progress.
- Opportunities identified through community feedback include increasing accessibility across the city’s sidewalks, trails and parks, including ramps, parking spots and increased maintenance of automated door openers.

## Key Initiatives

- We will develop a plan to review opportunities for accessibility audits of our public spaces to identify areas for improvement and to enhance the accessibility and inclusiveness. Return audit intervals will be considered where applicable.
- We will apply our accessibility design guidelines to applicable new projects and will engage the Markham Accessibility Advisory Committee early in planning large projects to ensure their input shapes the project from the outset.

- We will provide universal design training to key staff throughout the organization.

## 7. Customer Service

This requirement ensures that the City of Markham serves everyone's needs with dignity and independence. It includes proactively considering accessibility while programs, services, and facilities are being designed. It also holds us accountable for reviewing and updating our programs and services. It helps us make changes based on feedback from persons with disabilities. We have well-established policies that align with AODA standards, including the use of service animals and support persons, temporary disruption notices, and providing alternate document formats. Additionally, we have a feedback process in place to support our commitment to accessibility in customer service.

### Our Recent Efforts

- The public can access our services via chat, social media, phone, email, or in-person. Online options help to reduce barriers to information and services.
- Our City Council meetings are held in hybrid format with closed captioning provided.
- We have hired a corporate Accessibility Specialist to support our accessibility work.
- Our recreation staff work with families to provide necessary supports for children participating in recreational activities. Accommodations are provided to children as needed.
- Our Integrated Leisure Master Plan (ILMP) includes provisions for persons with disabilities.
- Our adaptive swimming program offers one-on-one support with an instructor.
- For residents with mobility issues, our [Assisted Collection Service](#) allows waste to be collected from the front door of residents' homes once they have enrolled in the service.
- In 2003, we became the first city in Canada to offer remote online voting. We offer multiple voting methods and provide free assistive technology on our election website.
- The Fire Services team works with the community to ensure safe evacuation plans for people with disabilities and provides staff training for emergency support.

### Opportunities

- There is a need to enhance training about disability and accessibility for our staff and service providers.



- There is an opportunity to review the provision of recreational programs for people with disabilities with intent to increase dedicated resources, reduce waitlists and increase the variety of options.
- An opportunity exists to increase accessibility supports and awareness at City-run outdoor events and festivals such as accessible parking, ease of travel, ASL interpreters, and accessible washroom locations.

## Key Initiatives

- We will develop clear protocols for handling feedback related to accessibility issues at privately owned facilities and spaces not operated by the City of Markham. This will enable the Customer Service Team to provide appropriate guidance and support.
- We will incorporate scenario-based training into our accessibility training to help employees practice and understand how to manage various accessibility related customer experiences and feedback effectively.
- The City will determine the best approaches to offer additional accessible programs and services for persons with disabilities.
- We will learn about how other cities and spaces are making outdoor events and festivals more accessible for persons with disabilities. We will consider how to improve our services to ensure that everyone is included.

## Conclusion

We are excited to introduce our Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, built on feedback from our community, people with disabilities, Markham Accessibility Advisory Committee and employees to ensure their voices are heard. We acknowledge the work ahead and are fully committed to making progress. We will develop a detailed implementation plan to achieve the key initiatives to meet the desired outcomes.

The City of Markham is committed to advancing accessibility through the implementation of this Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. We will continually track our progress on meeting the commitments in this plan and report regularly to the Markham Accessibility Advisory Committee and through the posting of the Annual Status report.

## Feedback

The City of Markham welcomes feedback on accessibility, especially from persons with disabilities. Your feedback will help inform our actions taken to create an inclusive community where everyone, regardless of ability, has the opportunity to thrive at the City of Markham.

To request a copy of this multi-year accessibility plan in another format or to send us your comments or questions, please contact us at the City of Markham:

Email: [customerservice@markham.ca](mailto:customerservice@markham.ca)

Mail: Contact Centre  
Markham Civic Centre  
101 Town Centre Boulevard  
Markham, Ontario, L3R 9W3

Phone: 905-477-5530



## Definitions

### Accessibility

Accessibility refers to how services, technology, locations, devices, environments, and products are designed to accommodate persons with disabilities. Accessibility means giving people of all abilities equal opportunities to take part in life activities. According to the Ontario Human Rights Commission, the term implies conscious planning, design, and/or effort to make sure something is barrier-free to persons with disabilities. Accessibility also benefits the general population by making everything more usable and practical for all people.

### Alternative Formats

Alternative formats refer to print, audio, or video materials that have been modified from their original format. Alternative formats present information in other ways so that everyone has equal access to the information. This can be very beneficial to persons with disabilities. Some common types of alternative formats are audio recordings, captions, braille, descriptive video, and large print. Alternative formats are sometimes referred to as accessible formats.

### Assistive Technologies/Devices

Assistive technology/devices include products, equipment and systems have been developed with features specifically helpful for people with disabilities.

### Barrier

According to the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2005)*, a barrier “means anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of his or her disability, including a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, an information or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy or a practice; (“obstacle”).”

### Disability

According to the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2005)*, disability is defined as:

- any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis,

amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device

- a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability
- a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language
- a mental disorder, or
- an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 (“handicap”).

## **Diversity**

The Government of Canada defines Diversity as “the variety of identities found within an organization, group, or society. Diversity is expressed through factors such as culture, ethnicity, religion, sex, gender, sexual orientation, age, language, education, ability, family status, or socioeconomic status”.

## **Equity**

The Government of Canada defines Equity as “the principle of considering people’s unique experiences and differing situations and ensuring that they have access to the resources and opportunities that are necessary for them to attain just outcomes. Equity aims to eliminate disparities and disproportions that are rooted in historical and contemporary injustices and oppression”.

## **Inclusion**

The Government of Canada defines Inclusion as “the practice of using proactive measures to create an environment where people feel welcomed, respected, and valued, and to foster a sense of belonging and engagement. This practice involves changing the environment by removing barriers so that each person has equal access to opportunities and resources and can achieve their full potential”.

## **Statement of Commitment**

According to the Government of Ontario, a statement of commitment “establishes your organization’s vision and intention to achieve accessibility. It is an important first step in the





development of accessibility policies and plans.”

### **Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)**

The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines or WCAG are technical standards on web accessibility. WCAG covers a wide range of recommendations to make websites fully accessible.

# Appendix A: City of Markham Community Accessibility Survey

## Key Findings

The City of Markham recognizes the critical importance of engaging with the community to identify barriers to accessibility and assess the City’s performance in addressing them. To this end, a comprehensive survey was conducted from July 8 to August 9, 2024, utilizing multiple platforms including social media, newsletters, street signs, posting in public spaces. The survey period provided respondents with ample time to participate and share their feedback. This report presents a synthesis of the data collected through Microsoft Forms and Survey Monkey.

**Completion Numbers:** 435 responses

Microsoft Forms – 21 responses

Survey Monkey – 414 responses

**Q1: Which of these statements describes you? Please select all that apply**

Total Respondents: 487 responses (Respondents had the ability to choose more than one response)

Answer Choice	Responses (count)
I am a person with a disability	194
I am a loved one or a support person to someone with a disability	189
I represent a community organization that supports people with disabilities	33
None of these statements describe me	71

**Q2: How would you describe the disability either you or the people you support experience? Please select all that apply.**

Answer Choice	Responses (count)
Vision (blindness, low vision, partially sighted)	51
Hearing (deafness, hard of hearing)	73
Mobility, flexibility, or dexterity (amputations or limb differences, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson’s disease)	218
Pain-related (Arthritis, back pain, migraines)	157
Learning (attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), dyslexia)	106
Developmental (autism spectrum disorder, Down syndrome, epilepsy)	106
Mental health-related (anxiety disorders, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder)	129



Memory (dementia, stroke)	38
None of the above	16
Prefer not to answer	9
Not applicable	23
Other (please specify) *	33

**\*Responses to “other” include:**

- Breathing, idiopathic anaphylaxis, lymphedema, all the above, acquired brain injury, cancer, senior persons, cerebral palsy, spondylitis, mother with a stroller, osteopenia, chronic GI illness, immunocompromised, obesity, epilepsy, sensory processing, aphasia, IBS, balance, fibromyalgia

**Q3: Overall, how would you rate the accessibility of programs, services and spaces provided by the City of Markham?**

Answer Choice	Responses (%)
Exceptional	3.0%
Very good	20.3%
Average	47.9%
Poor	16.1%
Very Poor	6.8%
No opinion	5.9%

**Q4: How welcoming and inclusive of persons with disabilities are the programs, services and spaces provided by the City of Markham?**

Answer Choice	Responses (%)
Extremely welcoming and inclusive	5.1%
Very welcoming and inclusive	12.8%
Moderately welcoming and inclusive	46.0%
Slightly welcoming and inclusive	15.7%
Not at all welcoming and inclusive	8.1%
No opinion	12.34%

**Q5: How would you rate the accessibility of programs, services and spaces provided by the City of Markham compared to five years ago?**



<b>Answer Choice</b>	<b>Responses (%)</b>
Much better	13.1%
Slightly better	28.8%
The same	32.2%
Slightly worse	1.3%
Much worse	5.5%
No opinion	19.1%

**Q6: How would you rate the accessibility of the following programs, services and spaces provided by the City of Markham?**

	<b>Exceptional</b>	<b>Very good</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Poor</b>	<b>Very poor</b>	<b>No opinion</b>
<b>Buildings and Facilities</b>	4.7%	27.7%	50.0%	8.5%	6.0%	7.2%
<b>Information on programs and services for persons with disabilities</b>	3.8%	10.6%	38.5%	23.0%	12.8%	10.7%
<b>On-street accessible parking</b>	3.0%	14.6%	35.2%	22.3%	13.7%	10.7%
<b>In-person services</b>	5.6%	13.7%	41.2%	15.0%	9.0%	15.5%
<b>Online services</b>	5.2%	12.6%	39.6%	16.1%	7.4%	19.1%
<b>City-run festivals and events</b>	3.4%	15.0%	37.3%	21.5%	8.6%	14.2%
<b>Outdoor recreation areas</b>	4.3%	15.5%	37.8%	21.5%	9.0%	12.4%
<b>City job opportunities</b>	3.0%	5.2%	19.7%	14.2%	12.0%	50.0%
<b>City of Markham website</b>	4.3%	13.3%	36.9%	15.5%	6.4%	22.3%

**Q7: What barriers to accessibility have you noticed in the past two years in the City of Markham's programs, services and spaces?**

Below are the responses to question 7, synthesized and organized by priority area.



## Culture

- **Events and Festivals:**
  - Outdoor events and festivals often lack accessibility, with inadequate parking, challenging travel routes, and insufficient seating along pathways.
  - There is also a lack of inclusive amenities, such as ASL interpreters and accessible washrooms at events.
- **Community Inclusion:**
  - There is a general lack of public education and awareness regarding the needs of people with disabilities.
  - Issues like the misuse of accessible parking and the absence of inclusive practices in community programs were common responses.

## Information and Communication Technologies

- **Website Accessibility:**
  - The City of Markham's website is difficult to navigate, especially for those with disabilities.
  - It lacks support for assistive technologies like screen readers
  - Information is often outdated or hard to find.
  - There is also an over-reliance on online communication and registration, which excludes individuals with limited technological access or skills.
- **Public Communication:**
  - Accessible information about city programs and services is lacking, particularly for older adults and those with disabilities.
  - Information is often not available in accessible formats
  - Limited use of alternative communication channels like social media.

## Employment

- **Workplace Support:**
  - There is limited support for people with disabilities in the workplace, including inadequate staff training and a lack of accessible facilities. This creates barriers to employment for individuals with disabilities.

## Transportation

- **Public Transit:**
  - Public transportation is unreliable and expensive, with long wait times that pose challenges for those with disabilities.

- Many transit stops and routes are not accessible, creating barriers for those relying on public transport.

## Design of Public Spaces

- **Sidewalks:**
  - Many sidewalks are poorly maintained, uneven, or completely missing, making them difficult for people using mobility devices.
  - Sidewalks are often not cleared of snow, and curb cuts are inadequate for crossing streets.
- **Public Spaces:**
  - Parks and playgrounds also lack proper accessibility features, such as paved trails and ramps, with surfaces like sand and woodchips being particularly problematic for wheelchair users.
- **Building Accessibility:**
  - Many buildings lack ramps and automatic door openers.
  - Even when these features are present, they are often poorly maintained or broken.
  - Older buildings, in particular, do not meet accessibility standards, with narrow doorways and inadequate facilities.
- **Inconsistent Maintenance:**
  - Accessibility features, such as automatic door openers and accessible washrooms, are not regularly maintained, leading to frequent breakdowns and further limiting access for people with disabilities.
- **Parking:**
  - There is a shortage of accessible parking spaces, especially in high-demand areas like community centers and Main Street Markham.
  - These spots are often misused or inadequately maintained, and the size of parking spaces is frequently insufficient for wheelchair vans.

## Customer Services

- **Staff Training:**



- Many city staff members, especially those in recreational programs, lack training on how to interact with people with disabilities, leading to unintentional exclusion or disrespectful treatment.
- **Program Availability and Inclusivity:**
  - There is a shortage of recreational programs for people with disabilities, with long waitlists and limited variety.
  - Programs often do not cater to specific needs, such as those of children with autism or ADHD.

## **Q8: What changes would you like the City of Markham to make to improve experiences for persons with disabilities?**

Below are the responses to question 8, synthesized and organized by priority area.

### **Culture**

- **Awareness and Education:**
  - Increase public education and awareness about disabilities, including invisible disabilities, to foster greater understanding and inclusivity.
  - This could include more information posters, seminars, and public awareness campaigns.
- **Inclusive Events:**
  - Improve inclusivity at public events by providing accessible seating, quiet spaces, sensory-friendly options, and ensuring the accessibility of venues.
  - Events should accommodate people with various disabilities, including the need for interpreters, assistants, and other helpers.
- **Community Engagement:**
  - Engage directly with people with disabilities in planning and executing programs and events to ensure their needs are met.
  - Regular town meetings or focus groups could be used to gather feedback and discuss accessibility concerns.

### **Information and Communication Technologies**

- **Website Accessibility:**



- Make the City of Markham's website more accessible by supporting assistive technologies and ensuring information is easy to find and navigate.
- Provide alternative methods for accessing city services, such as phone or in-person options for those who have difficulty with online registration.
- **Public Communication:**
  - Improve communication about available services and programs for people with disabilities.
  - Information should be prominently displayed and easily accessible, with multiple channels used to reach a diverse audience.

## Employment

- **Job Opportunities:**
  - Increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities by ensuring that job listings are accessible and providing accommodations in the workplace.
  - Employment programs and supports should be tailored to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities.
- **Hiring Practices:**
  - Encourage or mandate the hiring of individuals with disabilities in community centers and municipal jobs to promote inclusivity and provide role models within the community.

## Transportation

- **Public Transit:**
  - Improve access to public transportation for people with disabilities, including better services for wheelchair users and more accessible transit stops.
  - Consider the addition of more accessible bus services and the reduction of transit costs for people with disabilities.

## Design of Public Spaces

- **Accessible Parking:**
  - Increase the number of accessible parking spots throughout the city, especially in high-demand areas like malls, community centers, and Main Street Markham.
  - Parking enforcement should be stricter to prevent misuse of accessible spots.
- **Road and Sidewalk Maintenance:**



- Prioritize snow removal and maintenance of roads and sidewalks to ensure they are safe and accessible for people with disabilities, particularly during the winter months.
- **Sidewalks and Crosswalks:**
  - Repair and maintain sidewalks to ensure they are smooth and accessible, with properly designed curb cuts and crosswalks that are easy to navigate for people using mobility devices.
- **Parks and Playgrounds:**
  - Upgrade parks and playgrounds to meet AODA standards, including adding accessible pathways, ramps, and surfaces that are safe for wheelchair users.
- **Building Accessibility:**
  - Improve accessibility in public and private buildings by ensuring that doorways are wide enough for various mobility devices
  - installing and maintaining automatic door openers and providing accessible washrooms.
  - Encourage or mandate accessibility upgrades during renovations or new constructions.
- **Maintenance and Upkeep:**
  - Ensure that accessibility features, such as automatic door openers, elevators, and ramps, are regularly maintained and repaired promptly when broken.
  - This also includes keeping public spaces like pool change rooms clean and dry to prevent accidents.
- **Funding for Accessibility Improvements:**
  - Provide financial support or grants for businesses to make accessibility upgrades, such as installing ramps or automatic doors. The city should also prioritize funding for accessibility improvements in public spaces and buildings.

### Customer Services

- **Staff Training:**
  - Provide more training for city staff on how to interact with people with disabilities, including those with invisible disabilities.
  - Staff should be aware of how to support participants in programs and events, and how to prevent ableism.

- **Program Availability and Inclusivity:**
  - Offer more programs specifically designed for people with disabilities, including adaptive recreational programs and one-on-one support.
  - Programs should be available year-round and across multiple locations to ensure accessibility for all residents.

## **Q9: What products or services might the City of Markham add to better meet the needs of persons with disabilities**

Below are the responses to question 9, synthesized and organized by priority area.

### Culture

- **Inclusive Programs and Events:**
  - Ensure that events have dedicated times for people with disabilities, reduced sensory stimuli, and adequate accessibility options.
- **Public Awareness and Education:**
  - Increase awareness about disabilities through social media, banners, and public campaigns.
  - Provide workshops and seminars to educate the community about disabilities and available services.

### Information and Communication Technologies

- **Digital Accessibility:**
  - Improve the City of Markham's website to make it more accessible and user-friendly.
  - Introduce a text or WhatsApp number monitored by city staff to provide quick support for issues related to accessibility.
  - Offer webinars and an online platform for reporting disability-related issues and learning about available services.

### Employment

- **Job Opportunities for People with Disabilities:**
  - Create more job opportunities specifically for people with disabilities within the city.
  - Encourage the hiring of individuals with disabilities in various roles, including advisory positions to guide the city's accessibility initiatives.

## Transportation

- **Improve public transportation services for people with disabilities:**
  - Include better access to transit
  - Reduce wait times
  - Provide more affordable options.
  - Implement specialized transportation services, such as direct shuttle services for people with disabilities to events and programs
  - Improve accessibility to buses and trains.

## Design of Public Spaces

- **Accessible Infrastructure:**
  - Improve the accessibility of public spaces by widening doorways, installing brighter signage, and adding ramps and automated doors to buildings.
  - Ensure playgrounds and parks are wheelchair accessible by replacing sand with rubber turf and adding accessible play equipment.
  - Enhance sidewalks by adding more entry points, leveling walking paths, and ensuring they are cleared of snow during winter.
- **Accessible Parking:**
  - Increase the availability of accessible parking spaces across the city, particularly in high-demand areas like malls and community centers.
  - Ensure that these spots are kept clear of snow and other obstructions during the winter months.
- **Regular Maintenance and Upgrades:**
  - Ensure that all accessibility features, such as elevators, ramps, and door openers, are regularly maintained and promptly repaired.
  - Mark designated washrooms and parking spots clearly
  - Enforce laws against improper use of accessible parking.

## Customer Services

- **Increased Staff Support:**
  - Provide more in-person staff and improve the response time for phone and email inquiries.
  - Ensure that staff are knowledgeable about disabilities and trained to provide appropriate support, including understanding neurodiversity and hidden disabilities.

- Consider creating a separate 1-800 number for people with disabilities to address specific needs without language barriers.
- **Enhanced Program Availability:**
  - Expand the availability of adaptive and inclusive programs, including sports, recreational activities, sensory-friendly activities, and social events for children and adults with disabilities.
  - Increase staff-to-participant ratios in programs that include individuals with disabilities to ensure they receive adequate support.
  - Create programs that cater specifically to neurodiverse individuals, such as those with autism or ADHD.
  - Offer programs that help newly disabled individuals learn about available resources and support.
  - Additionally, provide training to private academies on how to support children with disabilities, particularly those with invisible disabilities.
- **Affordable Services and Equipment:**
  - Offer more affordable therapy and rehabilitation services, including accessible gym memberships and physiotherapy programs.
  - Provide financial assistance for home accessibility modifications, such as installing accessible showers.
  - Consider implementing a mobile shower service for seniors and individuals with disabilities who lack accessible bathing facilities at home.

**Q10: Is there anything else about accessibility that you would like to share with the City?**

Below are the responses to question 10, synthesized and condensed:

- **Ongoing Improvement:** Continue prioritizing accessibility and involve people with disabilities directly in decision-making rather than relying solely on experts.
- **Inclusive Programs and Facilities:** Expand adaptive programs and improve public facilities with features like paved paths, more benches, and better-designed accessible washrooms.
- **Awareness and Training:** Enhance disability awareness and training for City staff, including police, and promote employment opportunities for people with disabilities.
- **Better Communication:** Establish dedicated channels for reporting accessibility issues and ensure that the voices of people with disabilities are heard and acted upon.

- Improved Public Spaces: Maintain sidewalks better, especially in winter, increase accessible parking at events, and ensure portable toilets are accessible.
- Community Involvement: Engage young people with disabilities in accessibility initiatives and host workshops and events tailored to their needs.
- Support for Caregivers: Provide more support and respite care for those caring for people with disabilities.

**Q11: What is your age group?**

Answer Choice	Responses (%)
Under 16 years old	1.8%
16-24 years	7.9%
25-34 years	11.8%
35-44 years	14.9%
45-54 years	21.9%
55-64 years	16.2%
65-74 years	12.3%
75 years or older	10.5%
Prefer not to answer	2.6%

**Q12: Do you identify as Indigenous to Canada?**

Answer Choice	Responses (%)
Yes	3.1%
No	90.7%
Prefer not to answer	6.1%

**Q13: People often describe themselves by their race or racial background. For example, some people consider themselves “Black”, “White” or “East Asian.” Which race category best describes you? Please select one response.**

Answer Choice	Responses (%)
Arab, Middle Eastern or White Asian	3.1%
Black	3.1%
East Asian	16.7%
First Nations	0.04%
Latin American	1.3%

South Asian or Indo-Caribbean	8.4%
Southeast Asian	4.8%
White	3.8%
More than one race category or mixed race	4.0%
Not listed	0.04%
Prefer not to answer	11.0%
Other (please specify) *	8.4%

**\*Responses to other included:**

- West Indian, Canadian, White Anglo Protestant, South African Canadian, Jewish

**Q14: Gender identity is the gender that people identify with or how they perceive themselves, which may be different from their sex assigned at birth. What best describes your gender? Please select one response.**

Answer Choice	Responses (%)
Female	61.8%
Male	16.4%
Non-binary	0.04%
Genderqueer	0.04%
Transgender	0%
Two-spirit	0%
Genderfluid	0.04%
Agender	0.04%
Prefer not to answer	6.7%
Other (please specify) *	4.6%

**Q15: Please provide the first 3 digits for your postal code (for example, L3R)**

Answer Choice	Responses (%)
L3P	19.6%
L3R	19.2%
L3S	12.1%
L6B	13.6%
L6C	7.0%
L6E	11.2%
L6G	2.8%
No fixed address	1.4%
I don't know	1.9%

Prefer not to answer	11.2%
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\*There were multiple responses in the “other” section from Q13 and Q14 indicating their postal code was not listed in Q15.