



Report to: General Committee

Meeting Date: December 3, 2024

SUBJECT: City of Markham Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2025–2029

PREPARED BY: Dana Honsberger, Project Manager, Sustainability & Asset Management

Kinya Baker, Manager, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility, People Services

RECOMMENDATION:

1. That the report entitled “City of Markham Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2025-2029” be received;
2. That Council approve the City of Markham Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2025-2029; and
3. That Staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to seek approval from Council for the City of Markham 2025–2029 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. This Plan is part of our work to maintain compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act and to demonstrate our continued commitment to accessibility.

BACKGROUND:

In 2005, Ontario became the first jurisdiction in Canada to pass a law establishing a goal and timeframe for accessibility. The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) sets out a process for developing, implementing and enforcing accessibility standards to make Ontario more accessible and inclusive. Under the Act’s Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR), the City of Markham is required to develop and publish a multi-year accessibility plan (MYAP), update this Plan at least every five years and report on it annually. This plan outlines how the City will meet its policy commitments under the AODA obligations to identify, prevent and remove barriers for persons with disabilities over the next five years.

The City’s current MYAP expires at the end of 2024. The new MYAP must be published on the City’s website prior to this date to maintain compliance with the AODA.

OPTIONS/ DISCUSSION:

The multi-year accessibility plan (MYAP) provides a strategic overview of the City's commitment to accessibility along with actions the City intends to take to proactively address accessibility within the organization and the community. The City has implemented accessibility improvements as opportunities arose or on an as needed basis to continue to maintain compliance. The intent of this MYAP is to reinforce accessibility thinking as a part of our culture and empower staff to deliver accessible programs, services, facilities, and public spaces to enable an inclusive community.

Desired Outcomes of the Multi-Year Action Plan

The following are the Plan's desired outcomes over the next five years:

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.

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.

Developing the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

The City hired BDO Canada LLP (consultant) to support the development of the new MYAP. During the development phase, the consultant was able to build an understanding of the current state of accessibility at the City through existing document reviews and the following interactions with employees, the Markham Accessibility Advisory Committee and the community:

- 28 key employee consultations
- 2 consultations with employee groups from ITS, Sustainability and Asset Management
- 3 focus group consultations with the Markham Accessibility Advisory Committee (MAAC)
- 1 presentation to the Directors' Forum
- 130 employee questionnaire respondents
- 435 respondents to the Community Accessibility Survey

The consultant analyzed the information gathered and developed a comprehensive multi-year accessibility plan to meet AODA/IASR compliance, with relevant, meaningful and actionable plans and strategies. They found that while we are meeting minimum expectations, staff need a better understanding of what accessibility means and that there are opportunities to improve in all areas. A key improvement Markham can make is to work to build a culture of accessibility, where staff understand their role in providing accessible service and decisions to continuously improve accessibility in Markham are part of our everyday work. Markham should work to enable a leading organizational culture of accessibility that results in an Accessible Markham for all.

What is in the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan?

This Plan is intended to help prioritize what the City should do to close any gaps and provide excellent and accessible services to our community and employees.

This Plan outlines the accessibility standards and requirements from the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) that the City of Markham will follow over the next five years. The plan covers the following elements:

- Inclusive Culture*
- General Requirements
- Information and Communication
- Employment
- Transportation
- Design of Public Spaces
- Customer Service

* Inclusive Culture, which, while not an official standard or requirement, is included to reflect the feedback from our employees and community as well as best practices in accessibility and inclusion.

Each element is broken down into these sections:

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

The City of Markham is dedicated to promoting accessibility through the execution of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. The strategic actions outlined in this plan will enable the City to identify, remove, and prevent barriers, fostering improved access and opportunities for persons with disabilities.

Once approved by Council, the MYAP will be posted on the City's website. Staff will then prepare an implementation plan which will identify and prioritize key actions for the

next 12 months and for the next two to five years. Status updates will be provided annually and posted on the City's website as well.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

While it is intended that the strategic actions supporting the plan will be dispersed throughout the organization, it is important to ensure that appropriate resources are in place to support the priorities and recommendations arising from the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. Examples of accessibility projects and initiatives may include recreation program resources, public spaces upgrades, and document remediation. It should also be mentioned that projects will be scaled appropriately and that staff will work towards unlocking innovation to seize on economical opportunities for improvement.

Budget 2025 includes funding and resources to support accessibility-related initiatives, including capital funding for playground refurbishments as part of a multi-year plan to meet AODA compliance and personnel funding for an Accessibility Specialist to help the City monitor and advance accessibility efforts and serve as a corporate resource for the organization. Budget 2025 also includes some provisioning for incremental funding to support various MYAP projects once an implementation plan is developed with key actions prioritized. This may include training and education for City staff on accessibility standards and best practices and AODA document remediation. A staff Identity and Inclusion Survey was completed in 2024 to better understand the demographic make-up of our employee population and identify staff sentiment related to inclusion. The results will assist in identifying priority areas for further exploration to champion diversity and foster belonging within the workplace. This funding may also support the next step of this project, including the development and implementation of priority corporate initiatives.

The need for any additional funding/resources for priority actions will be considered as part of future budget processes.

HUMAN RESOURCES CONSIDERATIONS

In recognition of the important role that ongoing training and education has in supporting staff in having the needed knowledge and skills to advance the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, the City commits to enabling a culture of accessibility.

Mandatory AODA and the Ontario Human Rights Code training will continue. There is a real need for increased awareness and additional training, emphasizing that accessibility goes beyond physical barriers and includes a wide range of disabilities, both visible and non-visible. By providing this enhanced training, we can ensure that accessibility remains a priority for everyone, that our employee culture ensures that we are up to date on best practices and that we foster an inclusive environment where all employees feel involved and supported.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

Goal	Examples – How the Solution can Help Achieve the Goal
Exceptional Services by Exceptional People	Ongoing training, policy updates, incorporating procedures on providing documents in alternative formats, are just a few examples of how we can eliminate barriers and build an inclusive culture. Customer service will improve, and employees will feel supported.
Engaged, Diverse & Thriving City	Supports accessible facilities and public spaces for staff and the community.
Safe & Sustainable Community	Continuous removal of barriers is imperative to operating safe and sustainable facilities for staff and the community. The City will lead initiatives to raise awareness and educate both employees and the community on accessibility to develop an inclusive culture.
Stewardship of Money & Resources	Ongoing planning and budget review processes will ensure strategic actions demonstrate good value for the City.

BUSINESS UNITS CONSULTED AND AFFECTED:

Staff and leadership teams across the organization have been consulted in the preparation of this plan.

There is a strong desire for Markham to commit to and support desired outcomes and actions recommended in the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. Comments from Sustainability and Asset Management, People Services, Legal Services and Financial Services have been incorporated into this report.

RECOMMENDED BY:

Graham Seaman
Director, Sustainability and Asset Management

Trinela Cane
Commissioner, Corporate Services

Joann Sotiropoulos
Sr. Manager, Transformation Office,
Learning, OD & Inclusion

Claudia Storto
City Solicitor & Director of People
Services

Joseph Silva
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Chris Nearing
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Arvin Prasad
Commissioner, Development Services

Morgan Jones
Commissioner, Community Services

Bryan Frois
Sr. Manager, Executive Operations,
Strategic Initiatives & Communications

Andy Taylor
Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENTS:

City of Markham Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2025–2029
Appendix: City of Markham Community Accessibility Survey Key Findings