Appendix: 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?

Answer Choice	Responses (%)
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?

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

- **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.

o   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**:
  o   Ensure that events have dedicated times for people with disabilities, reduced sensory stimuli, and adequate accessibility options.

- **Public Awareness and Education:**
  o   Increase awareness about disabilities through social media, banners, and public campaigns.
  o   Provide workshops and seminars to educate the community about disabilities and available services.

Information and Communication Technologies

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

Employment

- **Job Opportunities for People with Disabilities:**
  o   Create more job opportunities specifically for people with disabilities within the city.
  o   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**:
  o   Include better access to transit

- o Reduce wait times
- o Provide more affordable options.
- o Implement specialized transportation services, such as direct shuttle services for people with disabilities to events and programs
- o Improve accessibility to buses and trains.

Design of Public Spaces

- **Accessible Infrastructure:**
  - o Improve the accessibility of public spaces by widening doorways, installing brighter signage, and adding ramps and automated doors to buildings.
  - o Ensure playgrounds and parks are wheelchair accessible by replacing sand with rubber turf and adding accessible play equipment.
  - o Enhance sidewalks by adding more entry points, leveling walking paths, and ensuring they are cleared of snow during winter.

- **Accessible Parking**:
  - o Increase the availability of accessible parking spaces across the city, particularly in high-demand areas like malls and community centers.
  - o Ensure that these spots are kept clear of snow and other obstructions during the winter months.

- **Regular Maintenance and Upgrades**:
  - o Ensure that all accessibility features, such as elevators, ramps, and door openers, are regularly maintained and promptly repaired.
  - o Mark designated washrooms and parking spots clearly
  - o Enforce laws against improper use of accessible parking.

Customer Services

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

MARKHAM

*There were multiple responses in the "other" section from Q13 and Q14 indicating their postal code was not listed in Q15.