

To: David Creery, Chief Administrative Officer
From: Cynthia Hislop, Clerks Services Coordinator
Re: 2024 Annual Status Report of the City's 2023-2027 Accessibility Plan

AIM

To obtain Council's approval of the 2024 Annual Status Report for the 2023 – 2027 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.

BACKGROUND

In accordance with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA), O.Reg 191/11 Integrated Accessibility Standards (IASR), sections 4(1) and 41(2), the City of Woodstock is required to:

- Develop, implement, and maintain a multi-year accessibility plan;
- Review and update the accessibility plan at least once every five years;
- Prepare an annual status report on the progress of measures taken to implement the strategies outlined in the multi-year accessibility plan;
- Hold a public meeting involving persons with disabilities to ensure that they are given an opportunity to participate in a review of and provide feedback on the accessibility plan;
- Post the accessibility plan and annual status reports on its website and provide the plan and/or reports in an accessible format upon request.

COMMENTS

The 2024 Annual Status Report summarizes the City's commitment to accessibility, highlights accessibility improvements from 2024, and outlines the areas in which the City has gone above and beyond the original plan. The report is attached for Council's consideration.

In 2024, the City of Woodstock's planned action items, as identified in the 2023-2027 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, included the following:

- Downtown revitalization project
- City Hall renovations
- Parks and Trails improvements
- Aquatics facility renovations
- Cowan Park Sportsplex improvements and addition

The projects that were carried over from previous years included the Art Gallery 4th floor renovations, accessibility features at South Gate Centre, renovation of the main washroom at Southside Park, the accessible dock, Market Centre renovations, and the Police Station building expansion.

The Annual Status Report includes a list of all completed capital projects and several initiatives that went above and beyond what was identified in the 5-year plan. Completed projects include the Reeves Community Complex splash pad, renovation of the multi-purpose room at the Cowan Park Sportsplex, and the addition of an accessible elevator and motion

activated faucets in the washroom at the Market Centre. Improvements that went above and beyond the original plan include a new accessible community garden at Donald Thompson Park, a basketball court at Homer Brown Park, accessible bleachers at Southside Park's Tip O'Neal baseball diamond, additional accessible parking and front entrance modifications at Cowan Park Sportsplex, and land purchase of former golf course to link Southside Park with trails and the development of a new accessible community garden. The City continues to develop trails, install accessible park furnishings, and improve park signage and play structures each year. Furthermore, monthly training for city staff is provided on document and website accessibility.

In accordance with the AODA section 14(2) and IASR sections 4(2), 41(2), and 80.8(2)1, the accessibility report was made available to the public on the City of Woodstock's website and a public meeting was held on November 13, 2024 to ensure that people with disabilities were given the opportunity to provide feedback on the accessibility plan. City representatives from Transit and Parks & Recreation were available at the meeting to discuss the report.

The Woodstock Accessibility Advisory Committee (WAAC) is to advise City Council about the requirements and implementation of accessibility standards and the preparation of the accessibility report, per section 29(4) of the AODA. Section 4(2) of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation requires that the Annual Status Report be provided to the Accessibility Advisory Committee for consultation. At its February 12, 2025 meeting, WAAC members passed a motion in support of the City of Woodstock's 2024 Annual Status Report of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, and recommended the report be considered by City Council for approval.

RECOMMENDATION

That Woodstock City Council approve the 2024 Annual Status Report for the 2023-2027 Accessibility Plan.

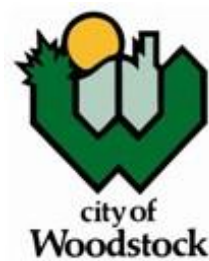
Authored by: Cynthia Hislop, Clerk's Services Coordinator

Approved by: Heather Buchanan, Manager of Corporate Services

Approved by: Amy Humphries, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer & City Clerk

Approved by: David Creery, Chief Administrative Officer

The City of Woodstock's Annual Status Report of the Multi- Year Accessibility Plan



2024

A summary of Woodstock's accomplishments towards inclusion in 2024 and looking ahead to 2025. In compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005.

**Annual Status Report
Accessibility Plan**

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Background and Purpose

The purpose of this Status Report is to report on the City of Woodstock's (the City) progress with regard to the 2023-2027 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan to prevent and remove barriers and meet requirements under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA). Consultation with the public was held through a meeting that took place on November 13, 2024, to allow the public to have the opportunity to participate in a review and to provide feedback regarding this Status Report in accordance with Section 4(2) of *O. REG 191/11 (The Integrated Accessibility Standards)*. The [City of Woodstock's 2023-2027 Municipal Accessibility Plan](#) can be found on the City of Woodstock's website.

The City's Vision and Commitment to Accessibility:

- To promote public awareness and sensitivity towards all persons with disabilities;
- To encourage co-operation between all service and interest groups;
- To identify and document relevant matters and concerns;
- To create a community that provides opportunities for barrier-free access to transportation, programming, recreation, and other City services;
- To embrace the concept of universal design to include both persons with disabilities and the aging population;
- To ensure that policies and practices are maintained in relation to the development and redevelopment of services and facilities that incorporate persons with disabilities and aging population statistics;
- To ensure that the City receives the maximum economic benefits from building an accessible city;
- To encourage public participation and civic engagement in community accessibility matters.

The City of Woodstock is committed to promoting a barrier-free city for employees, citizens, and all who live, work, visit, and invest in Woodstock. With regards to the Multi-Year Accessibility plan, the City is proud to present its findings and report on the development of strategies to remove and prevent any and all future barriers for people with disabilities and the aging population.

The Legislation

The Government of Ontario created the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act of 2001* to ensure accessibility practices were implemented to fully allow individuals to participate in their communities. The Act required all municipalities to produce an annual accessibility plan, consult with people with disabilities on the planning, make the plan available publicly, and create an Accessibility Advisory Committee.

In 2005, the Government of Ontario committed to developing five accessibility standards under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)*. The purpose of AODA is to develop, implement, and enforce accessibility standards to achieve accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities by the year 2025. These standards outline the identification, removal, and prevention of barriers so that people with disabilities have more opportunities to participate in everyday life.

The *O.REG 191/11: Integrated Accessibility Standards* regulation comprises five (5) standards. This is now law, and requirements are being phased in each year:

The **Information and Communications Standard** will help Ontario businesses and organizations make their information more accessible.

The **Employment Standard** will help Ontario businesses and organizations make accessibility a regular part of their recruitment, hiring, and supporting of employees with disabilities.

The **Transportation Standard** will make travel more accessible in Ontario.

The **Design of Public Spaces Standard** will make it easier for persons with disabilities to move through, use, and enjoy our community public spaces.

The **Customer Service Standard** will make it easier for persons with disabilities to obtain services and have their needs met accordingly.

For more information on this legislation, please visit the [AODA website](#).

Highlights of 2024

The list below highlights the planned accessibility action items for 2024 outlined in the 2023-2027 Multi-Year Plan and additional items added in the 2023 Status Report. These items represent the City's commitment to striving towards a barrier-free City. If a requirement was completed in the previous year, it has not been listed here.

Planned Action Items and Status

Downtown Revitalization:

- The project slated for 2024 through 2027 is intended to create an intensive and functionally diverse area downtown, serving as a primary business, cultural, and administrative center (improvements to focus on the inclusion of accessibility ramps and amenities to increase the accessibility of Museum Square). The portion of the downtown revitalization scheduled to commence in the summer of 2024 has been postponed until the Spring of 2025. The delay is to avoid potential procurement and weather issues. It also addresses concerns about inadequate lighting during the shorter winter days.

Parks and Trails:

- Paved pathways – Walkways connecting playgrounds to the sports field at Chuck Armstrong Memorial Park and McIntosh Park will now be paved in 2025.
- Paving the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA) North Shore parking lot – Postponed to allow work to bring sewer and water across the parking lot before commencing paving. This work is now listed in the 2030 capital budget, but there are issues with the utilities that may prevent it from moving forward.
- UTRCA North Shore accessible washroom – This project is on hold until new utility services can be run across the bridge to the north shore. It is now included in the 2029 capital budget.
- Play structure improvements – Northland Park playground – Work will start in 2025.

- Park furnishings - continue with benches along trails – Three standardized accessible benches were installed. A full review of the trail system has identified areas with the most significant gaps, and the goal is to have the benches evenly spaced to provide a respite for park visitors. The benches are part of the Parks Department's efforts to improve accessibility and user comfort.
- Park signage - continue with trail wayfinding – Wayfinding and signage were posted on the Roth Park Trail in 2023, and the system will be rolled out to others, with the Burgess Park trail next on the list.
- Trail development – continue building the Sliver Trail on the north side of Pittock Reservoir – A large portion of the Sliver Trail has been developed up to where the Woodstock Meadows Subdivision loops around the reservoir. Plans are to connect trails from Meadow Lake and Kinsmen Subdivisions in the north end of Woodstock, east of the Shanna Larsen Memorial Park, to meet the Sliver Trail. Work on the trail system is underway with developers from the Karn and Kinsmen Subdivisions.
- Meadow Lane Park – community park with playground and path – Work projected for 2026 but is dependent on the developer.
- Kinsman Phase 4 Park – community park with playground and path – To be built in 2025.
- Accessible dock carried over from 2023 - Completion is planned for late summer/early fall of 2025, and will include an improved parking area and trail.

Aquatics:

- Change rooms and facility expansion – The project is under consultation with an engineer reviewing the site to determine the expansion's potential.
- Splash pad (including a playground with rubber surfacing and pavilion), located in the upper soccer field at Reeves Community Complex, carried over from 2023 – Complete.

Cowan Park Sportsplex:

- Bathroom Renovation – Accessible counter and sink replacements – Carried over to 2025.
- Accessible Spray Pad – Work is planned for 2025.
- Installation of accessible sliding doors at the Main Entrance, carried over from 2023 – The Engineering Department is reviewing the drawings and expects the tender to be sent out this Spring.
- Facility redevelopment: the multi-purpose room renovation carried over from 2023 – Complete.

Art Gallery:

- Development of the 4th floor of the Art Gallery - Work on the items listed below is expected to carry over into 2025:
 - Renovations include changing tables for adults and babies.
 - Fully accessible gender-neutral bathrooms with additional stability bars and automatic sensors on the doors, toilets, sinks, soap and towel dispensers.
 - Touchless automatic doors through the building.
 - Fully accessible offices and common spaces (staff kitchen) with wheelchair-accessible light switches and appliances.
 - Way-finding signage in braille.

South Gate Centre

- Capital expansion of the seniors' centre, which will incorporate accessible features, carried over from 2023 – Work commenced in July 2024, with an expected completion date in August 2025.

Market Centre

- Renovations – Complete.
- Washroom fixture replacement to incorporate motion-activated faucets – Complete.

Police Station

- Building Expansion - The project proposal was received from the consultant in August 2023 – Work with the consultant is ongoing.

Accessibility Improvements Above and Beyond the Original Plan

Parks and Trails

- 2024-2025: The Downs Golf Course (former Golf North property), purchased by the City, will become an extension of Southside Park linked with paved trails and naturalized in co-operation with Ducks Unlimited. The extension will provide numerous opportunities for walking and biking, and the community gardens on the site will be accessible. The plan is to start a new community garden at the dead end of Salter in 2025.
- A basketball court with pathways was started at Homer Brown Park in October 2024.
- The new community garden at Donald Thompson Park was completed in the Spring of 2024 and included 10 raised accessible planters.
- Accessible bleachers were installed at the Tip O'Neal baseball diamond in Southside Park in the Spring of 2024.

Cowan Park Sportsplex

- Addition of six accessible parking spots in front of the Timbit Fields.
- The front entrance was re-sloped directly in front of the main doors to create a more accessible and safe entrance.

Information Technology:

- Staff training on documents and website accessibility – ongoing.

Looking Ahead to 2025

Aquatics

- Installation of an outdoor pool – This project has been removed from the Capital budget and the City is no longer planning on providing an outdoor pool.

Downtown Revitalization

- Project slated to run through to 2029 - improvements will include accessible ramps and amenities to make the downtown more accessible.

Cowan Park Sportsplex

- Parking lot and driveway rehabilitation, which will include accessible ramps and walkway connections
- Counter and sink replacement

Parks and Trails

- Paved pathways – locations TBD
- Playground improvements – locations TBD
- Park furnishings – locations TBD
- Park signage - locations TBD
- Trail development – continue building the Sliver Trail on the north side of Pittock Reservoir
- Pavilion replacements at the north and south UTRCA shore
- UTRCA Roth Park pavilion replacement
- Sally Creek Phase 6 Park – community park with playground and path

Engineering

- AODA-compliant push buttons for pedestrian traffic signals at Dundas and Teeple Streets.

Accessibility Feedback Policy

The City has a system for managing, evaluating, and taking action on customer feedback regarding the City's delivery of accessible goods or services. Feedback may be provided using the following methods:

In person at any City of Woodstock facility

Via email to accessibility@cityofwoodstock.ca

Via telephone at 519-539-2382 ext. 2507

All feedback will be investigated, forwarded to the appropriate personnel, responded to, documented, and tracked within seven (7) days. Feedback will be accepted in accessible formats and with other communication supports as required.

Continuous Achievement in Accessibility

General:

The City has the **Woodstock Accessibility Advisory Committee (WAAC)** whose members provide insight on matters regarding the identification, removal, and prevention of barriers.

All departments inform the Clerk's Department of changes to facilities or services which increase accessibility so that the annual status report remains updated.

Evacuation procedures are in place for persons with disabilities at municipal facilities.

Information and Communications:

The City can be contacted for access to accessible formats or communication support.

The City provides resources and education to the public on accessibility issues faced by persons with disabilities.

Employment:

The City continues to train all new staff, volunteers, contractors and any other third parties who interact with the public on the City's behalf about the requirements of the *Integrated Accessibility Standards, O.REG 191/11* and the *Customer Service Regulation, 429/07*.

The City continues to uphold employment equity policies and procedures.

Transportation:

The City continues to provide a transit system that respects people's dignity and offers equal service to everyone, including those with a disability.

Fare and hours of service parity between conventional and specialized transit services exist. There is never a charge for Support Persons for persons with disabilities or for storing mobility aids.

Design of Public Spaces:

A member of WAAC is designated as the site plan reviewer to ensure accessibility is considered when reviewing site plan approvals.

When planning sidewalks and walkways, the City implements accessibility features such as curb cuts, ramps, grate design and location, and grade elevations as per the City's approved Accessibility Technical Guidelines.

Designated accessible parking spaces are created at municipal facilities.

Customer Service:

The City offers customer service to accommodate persons with disabilities.

The City documents all accessibility-related policies and makes them available to the public.

The City provides proper training/orientation for all persons on the best practices to use when serving persons with disabilities.

Methodologies

Review of Current Activities to Identify Barriers

A review of current activities to identify barriers is ongoing with the goal of creating policies and procedures to prevent future barriers from being created, as well as viewing the identified ones as opportunities for improvement. Barriers will be addressed on an ongoing basis and public feedback is encouraged.

Monitoring Progress and Audit Function

The purpose of an annual review of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan is to evaluate whether targets are being met and to adopt a plan to meet current expectations. The Staff Accessibility Advisory Team and the Accessibility Advisory Committee meet in May of each year to discuss the current year's Accessibility Plan and to consider the upcoming year's accessibility capital budget. An annual public meeting must be held involving persons with disabilities to review and collect feedback on the Plan and the annual status report. This includes consultation on services provided by conventional and specialized transit along with Parks & Recreation.

Communication of Plan

The Multi-Year Municipal Accessibility Plan and any Status Reports are approved by City Council and are available to the public on the [City of Woodstock website](#).

Conclusion

The City of Woodstock is committed to continuously addressing any accessibility barriers and being progressive in developing innovative solutions to accessibility matters. We believe in integration and equal opportunity and are committed to treating all people in a way that allows them to maintain their dignity and independence. The City recommends that the Province provide accessibility funding to assist municipalities in the implementation of barrier-free services and facilities.

For more information on the City of Woodstock's 2024 Status Report, contact:

♥ Byphone 519-539-2382 ext. 2507

Via email at accessibility@cityofwoodstock.ca