

2024

The Corporation of the City of Waterloo Status Update on Accessibility

The City of Waterloo Get Reconciliation, Equity, Accessibility, Diversity and Inclusion (READI) Plan (2025-2030) includes the focus areas for the Corporation to continue to prevent and remove accessibility barriers. A detailed Implementation Plan is pending in 2025.

This Status update outlines the progress on accessibility the City has been working on. Highlighted below are the 2024 updates.

General Requirement Commitments:

Accessibility Policy

- The City of Waterloo Accessibility Policy (2017) is currently under review.
- The existing Accessibility Policy is available to the public on the city website.

Accessibility Plan

- In 2024, Council approved Waterloo's first Get READI Plan (2025-2030) which embeds accessibility work. A detailed Implementation Plan is pending in 2025 which will specify timelines, accountability and funding is pending. The Plan is available to the public on the city website.
- The annual status update is presented to the City of Waterloo's Accessibility Advisory Committee each year.
- The annual status update is available to the public on the city website.

Procurement

- One on one Procurement training with new Project Managers has includes a section highlighting accessibility in the training.
- The City of Waterloo Buyer's Guide that is distributed to all new staff includes accessibility requirements to follow.
- The Purchasing By-Law (2019) also references the need to incorporate accessibility requirements.
- All City of Waterloo Request for X's (RFX) include an AODA clause.
- Project Managers are requested to include accessibility requirements in the Request for Proposal (RFP) and Request for Tender (RFT) on a project specific basis.

Training

- New staff receive mandatory accessibility training through corporate orientation or through e-learning modules.
- Part-time and seasonal staff receive mandatory accessibility training through an e-learning module created specifically for City of Waterloo staff.

- The Corporate accessibility training brochures (2017) are provided to staff and volunteers. These materials are currently under review.
- The City of Waterloo is providing training for staff in reconciliation, equity, accessibility, diversity and inclusion (READI) and has a variety of learning tools for all staff along including webinars, experiential learning days, and workshops throughout the year.

Standards Commitments:

Information and Communications Standards

- The City of Waterloo has statements on the website informing people that accessible formats and communication supports are available upon request.
- Staff are trained to provide accessible formats and communication supports upon request. Resources to assist staff are posted on the City of Waterloo intranet.
- Given the amount and complexity of websites that municipalities manage, the City of Waterloo was not in a position to report compliance with the AODA requirements for websites in 2021 or 2023. A comprehensive review completed in December 2021 indicated a 90/100 score for WCAG AA compliance for the main website, Waterloo.ca and subsequent reviews identified issues with lumenfestival.ca, generationpark.ca, and winterloofestival.ca. The largest issue has been technical PDF content that may not be perceivable or operable for all users. The city's plan to work toward compliance in 2025 includes:
 - Migration to Govstack (Content Management System)
 - Content Accessibility Training
 - Document Remediation Training
 - User experience testing with diverse audiences
 - Remediation/Removal of remaining 25 Non-Compliant PDFs
 - Launch new waterloo.ca website with WCAG 2.1 Level AA compliance
 - Monitoring and Feedback
 - Compliance reporting

Employment Standards

- Policies and practices are reviewed on an ongoing basis with respect to recruitment, hiring and interviewing as per the requirements under the employment standards.
- The City of Waterloo job postings advise applicants that accommodations are available through all stages of the recruitment process and candidates who are selected for an interview are advised again when invited for the interview.
- The City of Waterloo notifies successful applicants of accommodations available to them through the offer of employment letter.
- The City of Waterloo notifies all employees through mandatory staff accessibility training that if they do require an accommodation or accessible formats/communication supports to do their job that this can be available to them and that employees need to

let their supervisor know. The supervisor and staff person work together towards an accommodation plan.

- Individualized workplace emergency response plans are created for employees with disabilities.
- The City of Waterloo has 2 procedures to support the early and safe return to work of employees recovering from non-occupational or occupational injury/illness (Sick Leave and Medical Accommodation Procedure and WSIB Return to Work Procedure).
- New READI working groups will launch in 2025 to continue to review current practices and procedures related to accessing policies, procedures and to address systemic and structural barriers.
- In 2020, The City of Waterloo introduced the Respect in the Workplace Policy and Program which sets expectations of respectful behaviour and to prevent disrespectful, harassing, or discriminatory workplace behaviours.
- Development and implementation of accommodation plans continue to be informed by the Human Rights Accommodation procedure which outlines the process for requesting, reviewing and implementing accommodations and supports.

Design of Public Spaces Standards

- City of Waterloo staff consult with GRAAC, before constructing new or redeveloping existing municipal recreational trails, outdoor play spaces, and exterior paths of travel, rest areas and on-street parking spaces. GRAAC has developed an accessibility comments sheet for each of these areas to help staff with accessibility considerations.
- City of Waterloo public consultations are open to all members of the public.
- The City of Waterloo Accessibility Standards document (2016) assists in implementing the Design of Public Spaces Standards, and is used under the City of Waterloo's Site Plan Approval process and shared with developers. This document is currently being updated alongside the development of new facility accessibility design standards.
- Annually review and update the chart, the City of Waterloo procedures for preventative and emergency maintenance of the accessible elements in public spaces and procedures for dealing with temporary disruptions when accessible elements are not in working order.

Customer Service Standards

- The customer service standards are included in the Accessibility Policy.
- The corporate training brochures for staff and volunteers include the customer service standards.
- The mandatory accessibility training for staff includes the customer service standards.
- Staff resources related to customer service standards are available on the staff intranet.

The Province of Ontario reviews all standards, which may require updates to existing policies, training, manuals, bylaws etc. Because of the reviews, revisions to current standards or new standards may be introduced which will include new requirements and compliance deadlines.

Those revisions and any actions related to them will be captured in the City of Waterloo annual status update. No revisions to the current standards were introduced in 2024.

Consultation with the Grand River Accessibility Advisory Committee (GRAAC):

As municipal projects arise, the Grand River Accessibility Advisory Committee reviews site plans and provides suggestions on how to best improve and achieve accessibility. In 2024, Members of GRAAC advised on/participated in:

- City Hall Universal Washroom implementation
- Button Factory Arts Centre Universal Washroom design
- Council Chamber Refresh
- City Hall 3rd Floor Renovation design
- Automatic Door Openers at RIM Park
- Eby Farm Playground phase 2
- Blue Beech Link neighbourhood and Eastbridge Green neighbourhood spray pad plans
- ramp from the Community Pavilion to Luther Village on the Park
- White Elm Park and Rummelhardt Park playgrounds
- Facility Accessibility Design Standards
- Indoor Community Space Plan
- Consolidated Engineering Landscape Manual (CELM)
- Laurel Greenway
- Assisted Snow Clearing Program
- Copper Street Leash Free Park design
- Accessibility around affordable housing initiatives on City-owned lands/Inclusionary Zoning
- TTY
- Accessible and Inclusion in Recreation and Leisure Programming
- Get READI Plan
- Audits of the Waterloo Park Splash Pad, Fire Station 1: 216 Weber Street North, Fire Station 3: 150 Northfield Drive West, park washrooms including Green lab, Solstice Pavilion, Lexington Park, Hillside Park, Westmount Sports Park, Waterloo Park East, and Waterloo Park West
- Barriers in the built environment tours offered to staff, leadership and Council
- letters of support for a park washroom grant and an employment tool development grant