

Richmond Hill Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

2020 Status Report



Update on Actions Taken
January to December 2020



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Message from the Acting Mayor



I am proud to share Richmond Hill's 2020 Accessibility Status Report, detailing our progress on the 2018-2022 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and other efforts to prevent and remove barriers for persons with disabilities.

In addition to meeting all of the 2020 targets of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and making progress on ongoing initiatives, Richmond Hill continues to go above and beyond to make our community accessible for all. Major accomplishments in 2020 include a redesign of customer service spaces at our Municipal Offices allowing for greater accessibility, inclusive programming and accommodations

in recreational services, completion of several parks with accessible play areas, significant progress toward accessibility of all electronic documents shared with the public, and a School Board Trustee by-election planned with accessibility in mind at every step.

I would like to thank our staff for their hard work and dedication to ensuring accessibility in Richmond Hill. Despite the many challenges we faced in 2020, we did not lose focus on accessibility and continued to make Richmond Hill a place where everyone has the opportunity to participate fully in their community.

Joe DiPaola
Acting Mayor

2018-2022 Accessibility Advisory Committee

Richmond Hill is dedicated to ensuring that our community is accessible in all areas of service provided to the public. The Accessibility Advisory Committee advises Council and staff in these efforts and on compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). The Committee meets throughout the year to discuss AODA-related issues and general accessibility matters, including:

- Site plans for new and existing municipal buildings
- Plans for new and renovated parks and trails
- Significant renovations in municipal buildings
- Plans for accessible municipal elections
- Accessibility policies and procedures
- Any other work related to AODA or accessibility

Members of the Accessibility Advisory Committee in 2020 were:

Councillor Cilevitz (Chair)	Kidambi Raj
Lopa Banerjee (Vice Chair)	Lisa Rosenberg
Berndardina Bathory	Patricia Rybka
Marisol Pestana	Paul Scotland
Paul Edwards	Simon Waldman
Edwin Greenfield	

Richmond Hill is grateful for their time, commitment and expertise.

Introduction – What is an Accessible Richmond Hill?

As part of the City of Richmond Hill's ongoing commitment to creating an accessible and inclusive community, we continue to follow the 2018-2022 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and respond to demands and opportunities to improve accessibility. The Multi-Year Accessibility Plan outlines our strategy to prevent and remove barriers in accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), as well as strategies for going beyond the AODA and optimizing accessibility.

In 2020, we continued to make progress on the measures outlined in the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, responding as well to disruptions related to the COVID-19 pandemic and unexpected demands for accessible services, such as the 2020 Public School Board by-election. This report details the progress made. It consists of five sections based on Richmond Hill's obligations under the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (O. Reg. 191/11) and the structure of the 2018-2022 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan:

- Accessible Customer Service
- Providing Clear and Accessible Information
- Accessible Employment Practices
- Accessible Design of Public Spaces
- General Accessibility Initiatives



Accessible Customer Service

The AODA sets detailed standards for the provision of accessible customer service. Richmond Hill ensures that it meets or exceeds these standards through our Accessible Customer Service Procedures document, and we also continue to optimize accessibility and inclusion. The Multi-Year Accessibility Plan includes a number of ongoing efforts to make our services better and more accessible.

Provision of Services

The frontline customer service staff of Access Richmond Hill are engaged in ongoing identification and removal of barriers to accessibility in our customer service experience. In 2020, in-person interaction was limited as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in reduced opportunities for identification of barriers in our physical customer service space.

Efforts to optimize the customer service space still took place in 2020, including a redesign of Access Richmond Hill's customer service area that increased spacing between the accessible customer service station and the adjacent station. Additionally, an extensive redesign of our Municipal Offices was completed to allow for all services to residents and other customers to take place on the ground floor, with the exception of attending or participating in Council meetings.





Inclusion Services

The Recreation and Culture Department's Inclusion Services team, formerly Integration Services, continues to work with individuals and families to ensure that all who wish to participate in recreational programs have the opportunity to do so. In the 2020 Winter Recreation Session, they provided many specialized and inclusive opportunities for individuals with disabilities. There were a total of 57 registrations in Richmond Hill's specialized and inclusive programs.

In February 2020, the Inclusion Services Section partnered with the Township of King and All Sports All People to offer two different programs for individuals with disabilities and their families. Richmond Hill hosted a Try a Wheelchair Basketball Event. This event had 17 individuals attend, who were able to try this sport, many for the first time. The sport wheelchairs were lent to the City of Richmond Hill from the Township of King. The second event was a Try a Sledge Event that was hosted by the Township of King and Richmond Hill staff provided on-site support.

Due to the facility closures that took place as a result of the pandemic, many programs were cancelled or transitioned to virtual platforms. Programs and services for individuals with disabilities are always considered as staff plan for the reopening of facilities and programs.

Accessible Library Services



Richmond Hill Public Library works with the City of Richmond Hill to ensure compliance with all AODA standards and requirements and engages in its own ongoing efforts to enhance accessibility.

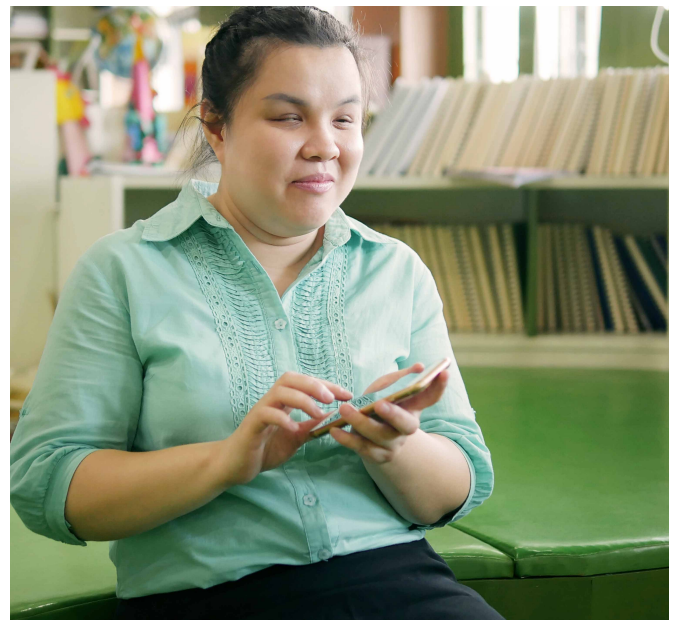
Programs

Programs with a focus on accessibility were delivered in-person, prior to the March 17, 2020 State of Emergency. These programs included:

- Vision Loss Book Club for adults with vision impairment
- The Adult Friendship Club for adults with developmental or cognitive disabilities
- Adult Colouring Club for adults with developmental or cognitive disabilities
- Sensory Story Time for Children with diverse abilities
- Collections

While library buildings were mostly closed to the public in 2020 due to the pandemic, the Library continued to provide access to books and resources through a curbside pick-up service in which customers could pick up ordered materials, including Centre for Equitable Library Access (CELA) collection items, outside the library buildings. Access to online resources through the partnership with CELA was also available during the pandemic. The following types of resources and services were used to ensure accessibility of the Library's collections:

- Physical large print and Talking (audio) books
- ebooks and eAudiobooks through various digital platforms
- French ebooks through Cantook Station
- Online magazines through rbDigital and PressReader
- Online music through Freegal and HOOPLA
- Online movies through HOOPLA
- Assistance in accessing Centre for Equitable Library Access (CELA) materials for the print disabled
- Continued borrowing services for students who are visually impaired. Student support mainly focused on virtual support but all students had access to physical materials including materials for visually impaired through the library's curbside pickup service.



Visiting Library Service

Seventy-three home bound customers who, due to disability or illness cannot visit the library in person, had 1,529 items delivered to them in 2020.

Richmond Hill has gone above and beyond the AODA standards where possible. Some of the accessible programs and services are among best practices and pursue the highest standard in accessibility.

Providing Clear and Accessible Information

Richmond Hill is committed to providing accessible information and creating a seamless experience for persons with disabilities accessing information. In 2020 and 2021, these efforts have largely been focused on ensuring accessibility of electronic documents published to our website and on other secondary features of our website. In most respects, RichmondHill.ca is fully accessible and has been since before the 2018-2022 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.

Web Accessibility

In anticipation of changes to the legislative accessibility standards taking effect in 2021, work began on ensuring full accessibility of all of Richmond Hill's web content, including individual pages and PDF documents for download. While this initiative faced some delays due to staffing disruptions related to COVID-19, Richmond Hill remains in compliance with AODA requirements and on track in terms of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.

The City made significant progress on web accessibility in 2020. A core team of staff from across the organization was assembled to develop and implement a strategy to completely overhaul Richmond Hill's web content to meet accessibility standards. Web pages, applications, maps and hundreds of downloadable documents were analyzed to identify accessibility limitations. Staff and management from all divisions were involved in reviewing materials to determine appropriate actions. This project is ongoing and is anticipated to conclude in fall 2021 with the implementation of strategies to maintain full accessibility moving forward.



Accessible Documents Training

In order to ensure document accessibility becomes standard at Richmond Hill, the City delivered extensive staff training. More than 60 employees attended virtual training sessions, and dozens more completed self-directed training that was made available to all employees. Richmond Hill also acquired software specifically designed to make documents accessible for use with assistive technology, which is now being used by approximately 60 staff members from all departments across the organization.



Accessible Employment Practices

Richmond Hill ensures accessibility from the recruitment and onboarding process and ongoing throughout employment. We are committed to an inclusive and barrier-free process for applicants for employment, and make sure that our workplace is accessible for new and existing employees.

Employee Accommodation Plans

Individualized accommodation plans are available to employees as needed. In 2020, seven employees had such plans developed and implemented to ensure their ability to participate fully and meaningfully as Richmond Hill employees.

Employee Mental Health and Wellness Programs

Human Resources staff is active in providing resources on work/life balance, stress management, and mental health awareness and prevention. New initiatives were undertaken in 2020 to ensure that outreach remained strong during the pandemic and that employees were supported, even if working remotely. These new initiatives included monthly wellness emails, wellness resources (such as healthcare forums, fitness and nutrition information) posted and promoted on Richmond Hill's internal intranet website, and increased communication and promotion of the Employee and Family Assistance Program available to employees.

Accommodation in Recruitment and Onboarding Process

As written on all of our job postings, Richmond Hill is committed to inclusive, barrier-free recruitment and selection processes. Human Resources staff continue to make every effort to ensure that all necessary accommodations are met throughout the process.

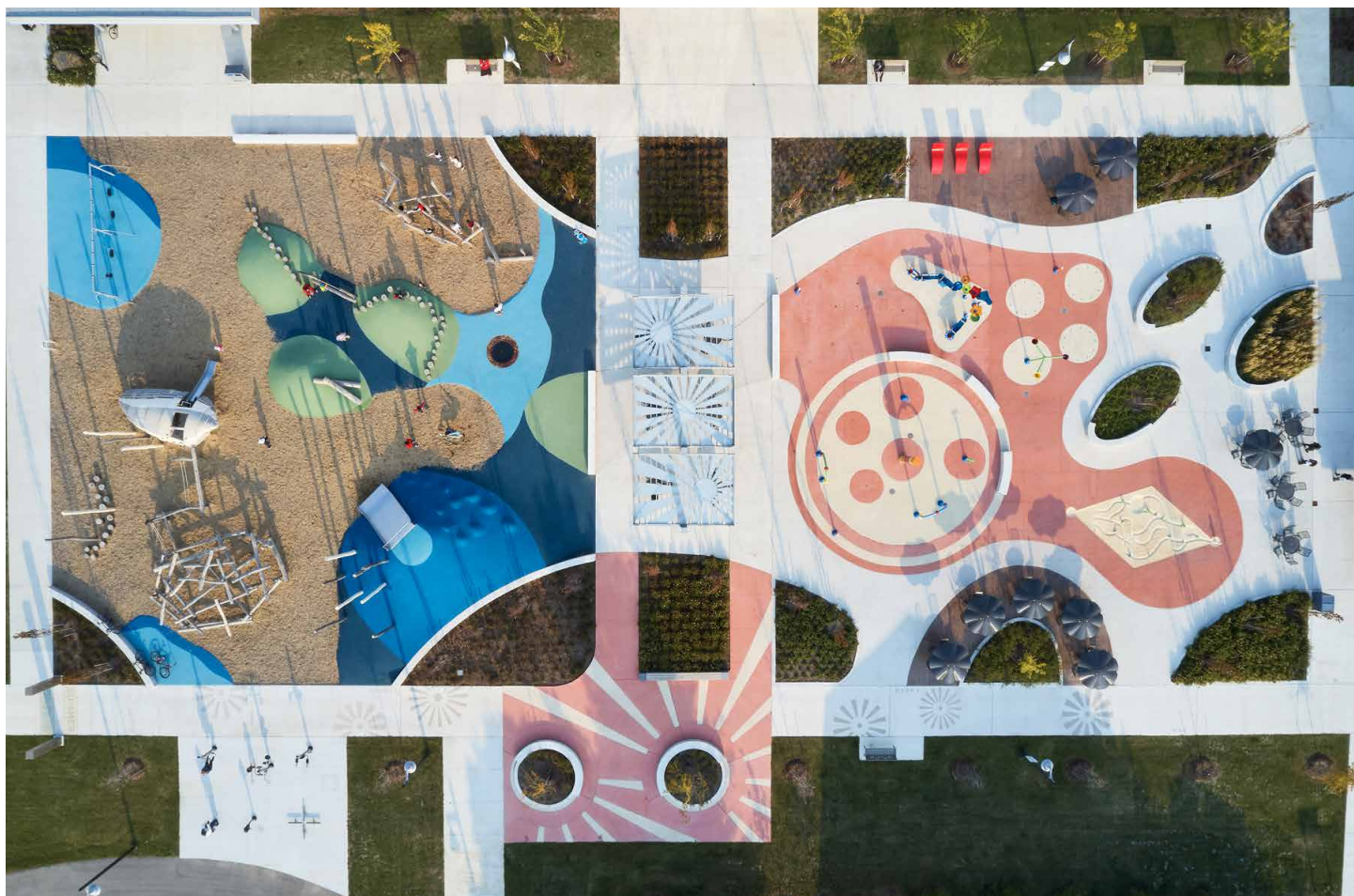


Accessible Design of Public Spaces

Accessibility is incorporated from the design stage right through to construction and renovation of all public spaces. In 2020, several outdoor spaces were constructed or reconstructed with accessibility a key consideration throughout the projects.

David Hamilton Park Revitalization Project

This park modernization was completed in 2020, with new play areas, a splash pad, multi-use courts, walkways and more. The play areas were designed in accordance with AODA standards and Canadian Standards Association (CSA) guidelines for accessible play areas (Annex H Guidelines).





Thomas Miller Armstrong Park

This is a new park that is constructed in an existing neighbourhood. Features include a play area, shelter, benches and tables, pathways and passive landscape areas. The park complies with AODA standards and the play area complies with the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) guidelines for accessible play areas (Annex H Guidelines).

Flood Farmstead Park

This new park was completed in 2020. The park includes a junior and senior playground, multi-sport court, shade structure, walkways and a variety of seating opportunities. This park complies with AODA and the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) guidelines for accessible play areas (Annex H Guidelines).

Lake to Lake Cycling Route and Walking Trail

This trail will be an 18 km long multi-use pathway at least 2.4 m wide, spanning all of Richmond Hill from Bloomington in the north to Highway 7 in the south when completed. The first two phases of the project, which represents the trail from Highway 7 north to Major Mackenzie, were completed as of 2019. The project was continued in 2020, with completion of Phase 3, representing extension north to Elgin Mills, to be completed in 2021.

Private Charles Hill Park

This new park in an existing neighbourhood is scheduled for completion in 2021 and includes a play area, shelter, benches and tables, pathways, and passive landscape areas. The park has been designed in compliance with AODA standards and the play area in compliance with Canadian Standards Association (CSA) guidelines for accessible play areas (Annex H Guidelines).

General Accessibility Initiatives



The AODA includes general accessibility requirements, such as establishing certain policies and procedures. Additionally, Richmond Hill has accessibility obligations that are not governed by the AODA and takes on other initiatives to optimize accessibility.

Review Accessibility Policies and Procedures

In connection with a standard report to the Ontario government on accessibility compliance in 2020, Richmond Hill was randomly selected for provincial audit. In response, staff in the Office of the Clerk gathered extensive policy and procedure documentation to demonstrate compliance. After the City of Richmond Hill's initial response in 2020, the audit process continued into 2021 and provided opportunities for optimization of some policies and procedures through consultation with provincial staff. Staff in the Office of the Clerk remain engaged in the ongoing review of policies and procedures to identify opportunities for improvement.

Municipal Elections

At the request of the York Region District School Board, Richmond Hill held a by-election for the vacant position of York Region District School Board Trustee, Wards 1, 2, and 4, in 2020. A detailed accessibility plan was prepared for the by-election.

This was the first election held in Richmond Hill that used internet voting. The internet voting website complied with WCAG 2.0 Level AA standards, in accordance with the AODA, ensuring technical accessibility of the voting platform as well as providing convenience to individuals with physical disabilities. Continuous voting was provided for a period of six days, allowing for flexibility to accommodate people with disabilities and others for whom voting during daytime or evening hours could be challenging.



Support was available to voters by phone, with a special Voter Assistance Helpline available with extended hours. Voters could also attend a Voter Assistance Centre in-person. Due to the pandemic, a very detailed hazard assessment and health and safety plan was prepared by the Office of the Clerk and Richmond Hill's health and safety experts. These plans incorporated accessibility and ensured that physical distancing and flow of voters in and out of centres were accomplished without compromising accessibility.

Procurement

In addition to the City of Richmond Hill's robust policies for ensuring accessible procurement and provincial compliance, we continue to take practical steps to ensure accessibility in goods and services procured. Currently, Richmond Hill requires suppliers to satisfy their AODA obligations to ensure that all employees, agents, or others for whom they are responsible receive training in relation to provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities under a contract with Richmond Hill. Efforts to optimize accessibility in procurement are ongoing, including the development of contract clauses requiring suppliers to provide information, including electronic documents, in accessible formats depending on the demands of the specific project.

Conclusion



In 2020, Richmond Hill continued its progress towards making all of our programs and services accessible and inclusive for all. We are pleased to report on the accomplishments of 2020 and are committed to continuing to identify and remove barriers at every opportunity

Feedback

Please contact us if you have any inquiries about this report or accessibility matters in general. You can help make Richmond Hill more accessible by letting us know if you have identified or experienced a barrier to accessibility.



Visit RichmondHill.ca/Accessibility or contact us at:

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