

2023-2027 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan



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Mayor's Message



It is my pleasure to share Richmond Hill's new Multi-Year Accessibility Plan for 2023-2027. This plan outlines how the City of Richmond Hill will continue our ongoing work to identify, prevent, and remove barriers for people with disabilities. The City of Richmond Hill has been committed to accessibility for many years, and this plan builds on the work from the 2018-2022 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. With the City's first accessibility plan having been introduced in 2013, this plan represents the beginning of the second decade of accessibility planning in Richmond Hill. We remain committed to making Richmond Hill the most inclusive and accessible place it can be.

In addition to ensuring that the City of Richmond Hill provides accessible and inclusive services and facilities, this plan outlines a proactive and dynamic strategy of greater engagement with our community and continuous improvement in accessibility. The City of Richmond Hill is committed to complying with accessibility legislation and evolving our approach to achieve the best results we can for Richmond Hill.

The work of accessibility is never truly done and requires an ongoing commitment and a mindset. I am proud of the accomplishments of the last 10 years of accessibility planning, and I am pleased that accessibility has become a principle that guides the City of Richmond Hill in all of the services we provide to the community.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David West". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Mayor David West

2018-2022 Accessibility Advisory Committee

For the duration of the 2018-2022 term of Council, which coincided with the previous Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, staff and Council were honoured to be advised by the Accessibility Advisory Committee. The committee provided their time, expertise, experience and insights to help the City of Richmond Hill become a more accessible and inclusive place. Their feedback and guidance were invaluable in developing this plan.

The City of Richmond Hill acknowledges their contributions and thanks them for their generosity in volunteering their time and effort.

Councillor Karen Cilevitz (Chair)

Edwin Greenfield (2018-2021)

Lopa Banerjee (Vice-Chair)

Joseph Frankfurt (2021-2022)

Bernardina Bathory

Kidambi Raj

Marisol Pestana

Lisa Rosenberg

Paul Edwards

Patricia Rybka

Paul Scotland

Simon Waldman

AODA and Beyond: 10 Years of Accessibility Planning

Since 2013, Richmond Hill's accessibility plans have guided our continuous work to meet our accessibility obligations to our community and to break down barriers to accessibility. Throughout this time, Richmond Hill has consistently gone above and beyond the minimum requirements. The City reaffirms its commitment to meet the accessibility needs of people with disabilities in a timely manner and to continue our efforts to make our organization and community more accessible as time goes on.

A lot has been accomplished in the last 10 years of implementing accessibility plans. Accessibility has become a priority in all of the work we do. More and more every year, accessibility is treated as a core value at the City of Richmond Hill. Staff from across the organization have taken ownership of the accessibility impacts of their work while collaborating and supporting each other in making Richmond Hill the most accessible place it can be. The City succeeded in meeting the targets of the 2018-2022 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. During the last five years, staff have reported on many exciting achievements in accessibility, ranging from an extensive overhaul of online information to new accessible play spaces in our parks.

The goals of this plan are to continue to:

- Meet accessibility standards and ensure that accessibility considerations are built into the work we do
- Engage our community to hear the voices of people with disabilities and work on their behalf
- Explore new and innovative ways to constantly make Richmond Hill a more accessible place



2023-2027 Strategy

To achieve our goals for 2023-2027, this plan takes a strategic approach designed to make sure that accessibility is incorporated in everything we do. The accessibility work of the next five years will be based on three interconnected strategic principles:

- **Meeting or Exceeding Accessibility Standards**
- **Community Engagement**
- **Continuous Improvement**

Meeting or Exceeding Standards

The City of Richmond Hill has consistently met all legislated accessibility standards over the last 10 years. By staying informed of new and existing obligations, we will ensure that we continue this record. The City will continue to strive towards improving collaboration among staff as we incorporate accessibility compliance in all of our business processes and practices.

The City of Richmond Hill actively monitors accessibility legislation and analyzes how we are meeting our obligations. By continuing these practices and building upon them, we will stay in compliance with legislated accessibility standards while also identifying new opportunities for greater accessibility.

Community Engagement

Breaking down barriers to accessibility requires dialogue with the community and creating opportunities for people to have their voices heard. The City of Richmond Hill has the invaluable asset of the expertise, experience and commitment of the Accessibility Advisory Committee, made up of residents in our community. We will continue to strengthen our relationship with the committee and explore new ways for them to be involved and impact the community. In addition, the City provides opportunities for members of the public to share their ideas and concerns related to accessibility and is always open to feedback and suggestions.

This plan strives to ensure that the City is able to hear the members of our community and the Accessibility Advisory Committee fully, and to act on their input to make Richmond Hill the accessible and inclusive place we strive to always be.

Continuous Improvement

We are proud to say that we have made Richmond Hill accessible in many ways, but we acknowledge that even if something is “accessible” it can still be better. For this reason, we continue to seek opportunities to make our City more accessible through process improvements, collaboration, and other new initiatives we discover and develop as we continue our accessibility journey.

With an increased focus on building accessibility into everything that we do, we will increase our ability to find innovative ways to make our City more accessible.



Initiatives



Building on our strategic principles, the initiatives for 2023-2027 will ensure that we are working towards our larger goals. All of these initiatives stem from our interconnected strategic principles of meeting or exceeding standards, community engagement, and continuous improvement.

By continuing to engage in accessible practices and actively seeking opportunities to improve, we will continue to strive to make Richmond Hill more accessible every year.

Enhancing Engagement with the Accessibility Advisory Committee and Community

The Accessibility Advisory Committee is an enormously valuable partner to the City of Richmond Hill, and engaging effectively and consistently with them continues to be a top priority. We will achieve this by providing new opportunities for the Accessibility Advisory Committee to get involved and by exploring new ways to enhance our critically important relationship.

In order to break down barriers to accessibility, nothing is more important than ensuring that members of the public who have experienced barriers have their voices heard. The City receives accessibility feedback in a variety of ways, including the Accessible Customer Service Feedback Form on our website. We are committed to finding new and better opportunities for the public to make their voices heard, and we strive to promptly and effectively address the feedback we receive.

The City is committed to being receptive and responsive to the accessibility needs of our community. To achieve these goals, the City will:

- Include the Accessibility Advisory Committee on more informational notices and notices of feedback opportunities provided to local residents
- Increase the visibility and profile of the Accessibility Advisory Committee by improving its web presence
- Review and update accessibility feedback processes available to the public and explore ways of more effectively inviting public input

Accessible Information and Communications

In recent years, the City has worked very hard to make our information and communications accessible and has made a lot of progress. In 2020 alone, the City trained more than 60 staff members on how to create and provide accessible electronic documents. We acquired specialized tools for making documents compatible with assistive technology, and made sure that every department and division across the organization was empowered to make their own documents accessible. We conducted a full review of our website to ensure that it meets legislative and industry standards for accessibility (WCAG 2.0 Level AA). We continue to make every effort to ensure that the information we share, including on our website, is fully accessible.

In 2023-2027, the City is committed to continuing and building on this work. To achieve these goals, the City will:

- Continue a collaborative approach to web accessibility and explore ways of enhancing web accessibility
- Provide emergency procedures, plans, and public safety information in an accessible format on the City's website
- Provide staff with dedicated tools, training, and resources for making electronic documents accessible
- Continue to offer alternative formats and communication supports upon request and notify the public of the availability of accommodations



Accessible Employment Practices

From the recruitment process to retirement, the City of Richmond Hill is strongly committed to being an accessible employer. Many important accessible employment practices have been in place for many years, and under the previous plan the City reviewed the accessibility of our hiring and onboarding processes.

We remain fully committed to being an accessible employer. To achieve this goal, the City will:

- Offer employee accommodation plans as needed to ensure that employees are supported in being able to contribute and be productive
- Develop individualized emergency response plans for employees as needed to ensure safety and peace of mind in the workplace
- Offer employee mental health and wellness programs and adapt these programs to the evolving needs of our workforce
- Offer accommodation in the recruitment and onboarding process and clearly communicate to applicants that they will be supported through the process as needed



Accessibility in the Design of Public Spaces

At the City, public spaces are designed with accessibility in mind every step of the way. Each year, staff provide an update to the Accessibility Advisory Committee on projects at various stages to describe accessibility progress and request feedback. Dozens of park, trail, and facility projects were completed and reported to the Accessibility Advisory Committee under the previous plan.

The City will continue to make accessibility a key consideration in the design of public spaces and seek opportunities for further engagement with the Accessibility Advisory Committee. To achieve these goals, the City will:

- Continue to follow industry standards and best practices for accessibility in the design of public spaces
- Meet or exceed technical requirements of public spaces from accessibility legislation
- Provide annual updates to the Accessibility Advisory Committee on design of public spaces
- Explore new opportunities for receiving feedback from the Accessibility Advisory Committee
- Maintain, inspect, and repair accessibility features in public spaces, both regularly and as needed



Accessible Customer Service

The City of Richmond Hill is committed to providing barrier-free customer service. In recent years, we have redesigned customer service spaces at our Municipal Offices with increased spacing for accessibility and provided tailored opportunities to participate in recreational programming. We continue to strive to break down barriers by updating our policies and procedures, receiving feedback from the community, and working with individuals to find accommodations for their unique circumstances.

The City is committed to providing customer service that is informed by the accessibility needs of our community and to continuing to prevent, identify, and eliminate barriers. To achieve these goals, the City will:

- Train all new staff on accessible customer service, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, and the Ontario Human Rights Code
- Ensure that any individuals providing services on our behalf through a contract with a vendor are trained in accessible customer service
- Continue to implement and update detailed procedures for ensuring accessible customer service, including procedures for enabling service animals and support persons and providing other accommodations as needed
- Offer individualized, tailored support for participation in recreational programming
- Continue to communicate temporary disruptions of accessible features in public spaces through the most effective channels, with alternatives provided



General Commitments

Under the 2018-2022 accessibility plan, the City completed a review of accessibility policies and procedures and made improvements based on our findings. We also explored ways to update business processes for greater accessibility. This work lays the foundation for the City's overall accessibility approach, and we are committed to continuing it on an ongoing basis.

We remain committed to implementing and developing a strong approach to accessibility. To achieve this goal, the City will:

- Review policies, procedures, and practices to identify and address gaps
- Conduct elections with detailed accessibility plans
- Continue to ensure accessibility in the taxi licensing process

Continuous Improvement

Continuous improvement is incorporated into many initiatives in this plan, but because it is a top priority of the plan it also demands its own independent initiatives. The City of Richmond Hill is committed to treating accessibility as a principle to be followed on an ongoing basis, and this calls for constant development and expansion of our efforts.

The City is committed to actively improving accessibility in all that we do. To achieve this goal, the City will:

- Analyze and assess legislative requirements continuously and apply them to the work of the City at all levels
- Build accessibility considerations into business processes and practices and provide support to staff in implementing new accessibility features in their work
- Collaborate with the Accessibility Advisory Committee to determine priorities and develop new accessibility-driven initiatives
- Actively invite feedback regarding accessibility concerns or comments and respond promptly

Conclusion



In recent years, the City of Richmond Hill has made a lot of progress in accessibility, and we remain committed to continuing this work. By focusing our efforts on the strategic principles of meeting or exceeding standards, community engagement, and continuous improvement, we can build on our progress and achievements so far and make Richmond Hill a more accessible and inclusive city as time goes on.

The City of Richmond Hill acknowledges the time and effort generously offered by the Accessibility Advisory Committee and thanks them for their insights and feedback that helped inform the strategies and initiatives of this plan. The Accessibility Advisory Committee will continue to receive annual status reports on our progress towards meeting the goals of our plan and their input will continue to influence the City of Richmond Hill's accessibility approach.

The City of Richmond Hill has been committed to accessibility since before the first Multi-Year Accessibility Plan in 2013. In 2023, we reaffirm this commitment and continue to become a more inclusive and accessible City now and every year in the future.



Contact Us

Please contact us if you have any inquiries about this plan 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](https://richmondhill.ca/Accessibility) or contact us at:

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RichmondHill.ca/Accessibility

Richmond Hill