

2018-2022
The Corporation of the City of Waterloo
Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

The City of Waterloo Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (the “Plan”) for 2018-2022 describes how the Corporation will continue to prevent and remove accessibility barriers. This new plan builds on the previous multi-year accessibility plan which was created and introduced in 2013.

Our Accessibility Commitment

The Corporation of the City of Waterloo values the contributions and participation of all citizens in the life of the City. To facilitate this involvement, the City is committed to providing goods, services and facilities that are accessible to all.

Introduction

Under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) organizations are required to develop multi-year accessibility plans. The Plan addresses how the City of Waterloo will continue to meet the AODA requirements.

The AODA legislative requirements guide the framework of the Plan.

Legislative Background

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) focuses on improving accessibility in areas such as buildings, outdoor spaces, employment, procurement, training, customer service, information and communications and transportation. The AODA applies to all private, government and broader public sectors. The AODA intends to achieve a more accessible Ontario on or before January 1, 2025. To do so mandatory and enforceable standards have been created.

The five standards are:

- Information and Communications Standards
- Employment Standards
- Design of Public Spaces Standards
- Customer Service Standards
- Transportation Standards (Region of Waterloo responsibility)

The general requirements for all five standards include accessibility policy, accessibility plan, procurement and training.

More information on the Standards can be found on the Province of Ontario website at www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/110191

Inclusion Services – Coordinated Approach

The City of Kitchener, Community Services Department, Inclusion Services is responsible for coordinating all aspects of the Plan including staff support to Grand River Accessibility Advisory Committee (GRAAC) and its subcommittees on behalf of the City of Waterloo, in order to ensure AODA

compliance. It is important to note that while Inclusion Services staff plays a facilitative role in this process, this work could not be accomplished without the involvement, dedication and leadership of City of Waterloo staff across the Corporation.

Grand River Accessibility Advisory Committee (GRAAC)

Under the requirements of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA), municipalities with a population of 10,000 or greater are required to establish an Accessibility Advisory Committee to advise Council on the prevention, identification and removal of barriers for persons with disabilities. The Grand River Accessibility Advisory Committee (GRAAC) is a joint committee of the Cities of Waterloo and Kitchener, Region of Waterloo and the Townships of North Dumfries, Wellesley, Woolwich and Wilmot and is appointed the task of advising the participating municipalities on the preparation, implementation and effectiveness of their respective Accessibility Plans. The councils also seek advice from GRAAC on the accessibility of buildings, structures or premises that the municipalities purchase, build, renovate or lease. GRAAC reviews site plans and drawings for new municipal buildings or developments. The Built Environment Sub Committee of GRAAC was formed in order to manage the volume of municipal build items coming forth to GRAAC meetings.

More information on GRAAC can be found on the City of Waterloo website.

<http://www.waterloo.ca/en/government/grandriveraccessibilityadvisory.asp>

The Plan 2018-2022 Commitments

The new multi-year accessibility plan (the Plan) includes how the City of Waterloo will continue to meet its commitments in providing goods, services and facilities that are accessible to all.

General Requirements Commitments:

Accessibility Policy

- Continue to review and update the Accessibility Policy as required.
- Continue to include where the Accessibility Policy can be found on all staff and volunteer training brochures.
- Continue to make the Accessibility Policy available to the public on the city website.
- Update all staff on any revisions made to the Accessibility Policy.

Accessibility Plan

- Continue to make the Plan available to the public on the city website.
- Continue to include where the Plan can be found on all staff and volunteer training brochures.
- Continue to provide the Plans' annual status updates to GRAAC.
- Continue to make the Plans' annual status updates available to the public on the city website.

Procurement

- Incorporate accessibility design, criteria and features when procuring or acquiring goods, services or facilities, except where it is not practicable to do so.
- Provide, upon request, an explanation if it is not practicable to incorporate accessibility.

- Continue to include accessible procurement practices in training materials as a resource for staff.
- Continue to incorporate accessibility features when designing, procuring or acquiring self-service kiosks.

Training

- Continue to provide mandatory accessibility training to all new staff.
- Continue to update and provide accessibility training to staff as required.
- Continue to review and update the corporate training brochures for staff and volunteers.
- Continue to update and provide new resources for staff on the intranet.
- Continue to provide staff leads to city affiliates and volunteers with updated training brochures.

Standards Commitments:

Information and Communications Standards

- Continue to provide emergency procedures, plans or public safety information in an accessible format or with appropriate communication support to the public, upon request, as soon as practicable.
- Continue to notify the public about the availability of accessible formats and communication supports.
- Continue to provide upon request, accessible formats and communication supports.
- Continue to achieve compliance with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) to ensure that websites and web content are accessible to people with disabilities.
- Continue to train new staff on the creation of accessible documents.
- Continue to provide staff with resources on the staff intranet.

Employment Standards

- Review policies and practices with respect to recruitment, hiring and interviewing as per the requirements under the employment standards as required.
- Continue to notify employees and the public about the availability of accommodations for applicants with disabilities in its recruitment processes.
- Continue to notify successful applicants of policies for accommodating employees with disabilities.
- Continue to inform all current and new employees through the IASR training brochure and through the mandatory accessibility online training of procedures used to support employees with disabilities.
- Continue to provide or arrange for the provision of accessible formats and communication supports for employees.
- Continue to provide individualized workplace emergency response information to employees who have a disability.
- Continue to have in place a written process for the development of documented individual accommodation plans for employees with disabilities.
- Continue to have in place a return to work process and plan for employees who have been absent from work due to a disability.

Design of Public Spaces Standards

- Continue to consult with GRAAC, the public and persons with disabilities before constructing new or redeveloping existing municipal recreational trails, outdoor play spaces, exterior paths of travel, rest areas and on-street parking spaces.
- Continue to meet technical requirements when constructing new or redeveloping existing municipal recreational trails, outdoor public use eating areas, outdoor play spaces, exterior paths of travel, accessible parking both on and off street, service counters, fixed queuing guides and waiting areas.
- Continue to review and update 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

- Continue to include the customer service standards in the Accessibility policy.
- Continue to include the customer service standards in the corporate training brochures for staff and volunteers.
- Continue to include the customer service standards in mandatory accessibility training for staff.
- Continue to review and update staff resources related to customer service standards on the staff intranet.

All Standards are reviewed by the Province of Ontario, therefore requiring updates to existing policies, training, manuals, bylaws etc. As a result of the reviews, revisions to current standards or new standards may be introduced by the Province of Ontario 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 updates.

As municipal projects arise, city site plans will continue to be reviewed by the Grand River Accessibility Advisory Committee for suggestions on how to best improve and achieve accessibility.

Consultation Commitment:

The City of Waterloo recognizes that broader public engagement along with GRAAC, agencies that provide services to persons with disabilities and citizens with disabilities is beneficial to the successful implementation of the Plan. Staff will continue to work with GRAAC, local service providers and citizens throughout the duration of the Plan in order to further identify, prevent and remove barriers for people with disabilities.

Future:

As required by legislation, once approved, the Plan will be posted on the City of Waterloo website so that it is available to the public. The Plan will be reviewed and updated every five years or as determined by further changes to the legislation. An annual status update on the Plan will be posted on the City of Waterloo website.

2023/2024 Update: In late 2022, a representative from GRAAC, Staff and Council, participated in a Corporate Accessibility and Inclusion Review. This review was the background for a new approach to the City's multi-year accessibility plan. The draft plan will be available in September 2024. For more information please contact: Amy Ross, Accessibility Advocate, amy.ross@waterloo.ca