



Five Year Accessibility Plan 2021-2025

Contents

- Executive Summary 4
- The Pickering Five Year Accessibility Plan for 2016-2020 5
 - Accomplishments..... 5
 - Pickering's Inclusion Leadership 6
- Vision for the City of Pickering - 2021-2025 7
- Accessibility Environmental Scan - 2021-2025 9
- Accessibility Standards & Best Practices 12
 - Ontario’s Legislative, Regulatory and Policy Context 12
 - Ontario Human Rights Code (OHRC) and Ableism Policy 12
 - Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) 14
 - The Ontario Building Code (OBC) 16
 - Other Jurisdictions 17
 - Best Practices 17
- Pickering’s Accessibility Resources 18
 - Organizational Changes 18
 - The Pickering Accessibility Advisory Committee (PAAC) 19
 - The Pickering Accessibility Core Staff Team (ACST) 20
 - Partnerships..... 21
- Pickering’s Accessibility Priorities - 2021–2025 23
- Future Actions - 2021-2025..... 23
 - General 23
 - Outcomes 24
 - Ongoing Goals..... 24
 - 2021-2025 Goals 24
 - Customer Service 25
 - Outcomes 25
 - Ongoing Goals..... 25
 - 2021-2025 Goals 26
 - Information & Communications 26
 - Outcomes 26
 - Ongoing Goals..... 27

City of Pickering Five Year Accessibility Plan 2021-2025

- 2021-2025 Goals 27
- Employment 27
 - Outcomes 27
 - Ongoing Goals..... 27
 - 2021-2025 Goals 28
- Public Spaces and Facilities 28
 - Outcomes 28
 - Ongoing Goals..... 28
 - 2021-2025 Goals 29
- Transportation..... 30
 - Outcomes 30
 - Ongoing Goals..... 30
 - 2021-2025 Goals 31
- Appendices 31
 - 2021 Approved Capital Budget and 2022 to 2025 Capital Forecast 31

Executive Summary

Compared with other jurisdictions in Canada and around the world, Ontario has established an impressively comprehensive and robust legal and policy framework aimed at achieving an inclusive and fully accessible province, and to defeat ableism.

“Ableism” refers to attitudes in society that devalue and limit the potential of persons with disabilities. Ableism may be defined as a belief system, analogous to racism, sexism or ageism that sees persons with disabilities as being less worthy of respect and consideration, less able to contribute and participate, or of less inherent value than others. Ableism may be conscious or unconscious, and may be embedded in institutions, systems or the broader culture of a society. It can limit the opportunities of persons with disabilities and reduce their inclusion in the life of their communities.

Since 2012, the Canadian population age 15+ with disabilities has grown from 3.8 million to 6.2 million. The disability ratio also climbed, from 14% in 2012 to 22.3% in 2017. The economic impact is substantial with 22.3% of Canada’s 15.2 million households containing at least one member living with a disability. The consumer spending of those households equals \$215.7 billion.¹

This means that there are approximately 21,000 people, or more, in Pickering currently living with one or more disabilities. As the population ages and the full impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are realized, we can expect the percentage of people with disabilities to increase significantly by 2025.

Notwithstanding Ontario’s significant leadership achievements in creating an inclusive and accessible society, Statistics Canada reports that Ontarians with disabilities continue to have lower educational achievement levels, a higher unemployment rate, are more likely to have low income status, and are less likely to live in adequate, affordable housing than people without disabilities. People with disabilities continue to experience difficulties accessing employment, housing and various services throughout Ontario. “Disability” continues to be the most frequently cited ground of discrimination under the Ontario Human Rights Code (Code) in human rights claims made to the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario (HRTO).

Under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), the City of Pickering is required to develop multi-year accessibility plans to help make Ontario accessible by 2025. An Accessibility Plan must be updated at least once every 5 years in consultation with people with disabilities and accessibility advisory committees. Pickering’s 2021-2025 Accessibility Plan provides a roadmap for City Council and staff on actions to prevent, reduce and, where possible, eliminate barriers to City programs, services and

¹ Statistics Canada’s Survey of Household Spending estimates average household spending was \$63,723 in 2017. Canadian Survey on Disability, 2017 and 2012; Survey of Household Spending, 2017; Labour Force Participation of Adults with Disabilities, 2012 13–1003–48.

facilities that may affect community members and visitors who have disabilities. Additionally, the Plan outlines how the City will meet its obligations under the Ontario Human Rights Code, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), and the Ontario Building Code and continue to enhance the accessibility of our services over the next five years. This is the City's second multi-year accessibility plan (MYAP) which builds on the fulfilment of its 2016-2020 plan and the City's compliance with requirements under the AODA.

Since Ontario's legislation and regulations relating to accessibility often specify minimum compliance requirements, the City of Pickering has often found that going above and beyond the letter of the law and seeking best practices makes practical sense in the pursuit of an inclusive community. For example, the City of Pickering has been a recipient of the David C. Onley Award for Leadership in Accessibility in 2016, 2017 and 2018 recognizing that it has gone above and beyond to improve accessibility for its residents with disabilities.

Pervasive change as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, combined with rapid municipal growth are themes that set the stage for Pickering's accessibility planning to 2025.

The Pickering Five Year Accessibility Plan for 2016-2020

Accomplishments

The Pickering Five Year Accessibility Plan for 2016-2020 has been successfully completed. On an ongoing basis, the Pickering Accessibility Advisory Committee (PAAC) has monitored progress with respect to Pickering's Five Year Accessibility Plan for 2016-2020 and each spring the PAAC presented Year End Reports and Work Plans to Pickering City Council for each of 2016/17, 2017/18, 2018/19, 2019/20 and 2020/21 informing Council of the Committee's objective assessment of progress on accessibility as well as to keep Council continuously posted on emergent accessibility issues and priorities.

- All AODA standards coming into effect from 2010 forward have been successfully implemented by the City of Pickering. Following consultation with the AAC and the Accessibility Core Staff Team and other City staff, the City of Pickering filed its required 2017 and 2019 compliance reports with the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility (the Regulator) indicating that the City of Pickering was fully AODA-compliant.
- The AODA's 2010-2017 requirements have been successfully completed. These requirements include:
 - providing accessible customer service;
 - providing emergency and public safety information in accessible formats;
 - providing employees with accessible and customized emergency information;
 - creating accessibility policies and a multi-year plan;

City of Pickering Five Year Accessibility Plan 2021-2025

- buying accessible goods, services or facilities;
 - making new websites accessible;
 - training employees on Ontario's accessibility laws;
 - making it easy to provide feedback, when asked;
 - making employment practices accessible;
 - making public information accessible, when asked; and,
 - making new or redeveloped public spaces accessible.
- There were no new AODA requirements introduced during 2018-2020.
 - Beginning January 1, 2021, public-facing websites must conform to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) Level 2.0 AA. WCAG is an international standard for making websites and web content accessible to a broader range of users with disabilities.
 - The AODA has not specified any additional future requirements, so far.

Pickering's Inclusion Leadership

Since Ontario's legislation and regulations relating to accessibility often specify minimum compliance requirements, the City of Pickering has often found that going above and beyond the letter of the law and seeking best practices makes practical sense in the pursuit of an inclusive community. For example, the David C. Onley Award for Leadership in Accessibility recognizes Ontarians who have gone above and beyond to improve accessibility for people with disabilities. While only a dozen or so Onley Awards are issued each year, and there are several hundred municipalities in the Province of Ontario, it is notable that the City of Pickering has been recognized 3 times with Onley Champion Awards for the following initiatives:

- 2016 Champion Award: The DRP Children's Games Partnership is comprised of the Durham Regional Police, the City of Pickering, the Campbell Children's School and the Grandview Children's Centre. This core partnership has been supported each year by a variety of other local organizations and numerous volunteers. As one of the partners, the City of Pickering has hosted the annual Children's Games, and welcomed young athletes, their families and friends to the City, and its accessible public facilities for more than three decades. Children aged 5-18 with a variety of physical disabilities and/or mobility limitations are eligible to participate in the Games and develop essential skills that will help them in future endeavors. These young athletes are given an opportunity to discover new inclusive sports and experience the joy of being 'in the game.'
- 2017 Champion Award: In planning and executing the inclusive renewal of its Delaney Arena, the City of Pickering has demonstrated leadership and sensitivity to both the letter and spirit of the Ontario Human Rights Code. The city has used a creative and innovative mindset to model exemplary inclusive design elements when renewing its recreational infrastructure.
- 2018 Champion Award: The City of Pickering organized the Canada 150 Youth Forum: A Confederation Journey 1867-2067. This information and active living fair inspired more than 700 youth in the city to share ideas about how they could

City of Pickering Five Year Accessibility Plan 2021-2025

help make Pickering and Canada more inclusive and accessible in the future. The free event encouraged participants to start to think about how their future employment could be improved with efforts to make the province fully accessible. The full-day event also included career planning, 3D prosthetics printing, breath-taking accessible breakdancing performances and numerous inclusive sports and recreation activities.

The City of Pickering's Canada 150 Confederation Journey Youth Fair has also been recognized by: the 2017 Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA) Award for Leadership in Accessibility; the 2017 Parks and Recreation Ontario Access & Equity Award of Excellence for Advancing Access to Affordable Recreation Programs in Ontario; and the cover-featured article in Facility Forum, winter 2017, the magazine of the Ontario Recreation Facilities Association Inc. (ORFA).

- At the January 27, 2020 City Council Meeting, Pickering Council set in motion the Pickering Accessibility Advisory Committee's Service & Support Animal Initiative (SSAI) with funding from the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility. A PAAC sub-committee was established to develop information regarding the current rules and best practices with respect to service and support animals, and related issues, particularly as they impact municipal operations and Durham businesses. The SSAI has hosted an Innovation Lab, and is developing a Monograph, and a launch event to rollout findings of the SSAI study in the autumn of 2021.

Vision for the City of Pickering - 2021-2025

Pickering is the fastest growing city among the eight municipalities located in Durham Region. As the gateway to the east GTA, Pickering (population 94,000) is strategically located where Toronto, York and Durham Regions meet. An award-winning municipality, Pickering is slated for significant economic and residential growth; offering an unparalleled quality of life for those who live, work, and play here. Its dynamic City Centre has been designated by the Province of Ontario as both an Urban Growth Centre and Mobility Hub, and continues to evolve as a preferred destination for creative learning, memorable events, and unique experiences at the heart of a vibrant, inclusive, and engaged community. City population is projected to grow to 115,000 people by 2025.

The City of Pickering provides municipal services and programs to the residents of the City. Services include provision and maintenance of municipal infrastructure, planning and development, economic development, municipal law enforcement, and inclusive cultural and recreational services. The City of Pickering is committed to making its community an attractive place in which to live, work and invest. Within 22,652 hectares, the City boasts top-quality municipal sports fields and recreation programs, a quarter-million square foot recreation complex, a 19th century living history museum, libraries,

City of Pickering Five Year Accessibility Plan 2021-2025

dozens of community and neighborhood parks, conservation areas, waterfront facilities and hiking trails.

The Corporation of the City of Pickering employs approximately 700 staff to meet the needs of its residents. The Corporation also maintains satellite facilities for Library Services, Fire Services, Recreation Complex, Community Centres, Pickering Museum Village and the new municipal Operations Centre.

Pickering City Centre Redevelopment Project and Recreation Complex Investments - As Pickering prepares for massive growth, the City of Pickering has been the focus of a recent Urban Land Institute webinar exploring its transformation from a suburban community to a sustainable city.

Pickering's City Centre is envisioned to undergo a bold transformation that will see an exciting array of new, state-of-the-art buildings and municipal facilities, including a performing arts centre, a relocated and expanded central library, a combined seniors & youth centre, three condominium towers, hotel, and a vibrant public square. This project is in partnership with OPB Realty Inc., owners of Pickering Town Centre (PTC), and focuses on the redevelopment of lands on the east side of the mall and immediately south of Esplanade South.

Forming a new downtown vision, the area around the Civic Complex and the Pickering Town Centre would be transformed. The proposed City Centre development would include a new two-story seniors and youth centre, a new 43,000-square-foot public library and a new performing arts centre. A 40-plus-storey, residential tower is proposed to be built over top of the seniors and youth centre. As well, with inclusion top-of-mind, a state-of-the-art Recreation Complex will be built in Pickering's new Seaton community and the existing Chestnut Hill Developments Recreation Complex is currently being extensively renovated at a cost of approximately \$6 million.

The City Centre project, would provide a unique opportunity to ensure Pickering's new downtown not only fully complies with Ontario's accessibility standards but models best practices in inclusive design. The City's programs, events and services will continue to be accessible and strive for continuous improvement. It is Pickering's ambition for its new City Centre to be seen, in all its aspects, as an Ontario showcase for downtown accessibility and inclusion.

Other major developments planned or underway, with completions anticipated by 2025 include:

- expansion of the new Seaton community to add approximately 70,000 new Pickering residents;
- construction and initial opening in 2021 of the Pickering Casino Resort and subsequent expansion of Durham Live;

City of Pickering Five Year Accessibility Plan 2021-2025

- design and construction of Metrolinx Light Rail Transit (LRT) from Oshawa to Toronto; and
- introduction of high frequency rail service from Quebec City through Durham Region to the GTA.

Other City plans that intersect with accessibility and inclusion are at various stages of development/completion and will need to be articulated and harmonized with Pickering's 5 Year Accessibility Plan. Such plans include those dealing with Recreation; Age Friendly initiatives; Affordable/Accessible Housing; and, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

Accessibility Environmental Scan - 2021-2025

To inform the priorities and content of Pickering's Five Year Accessibility Plan 2021-2025, a scan of Pickering's accessibility environment has been conducted with input from the Pickering Accessibility Advisory Committee; the Pickering Accessibility Core Staff Team, persons with disabilities in the City of Pickering, the Ontario Network of Accessibility Professionals (ONAP), as well as the Pickering community at large. This scan has identified a number of factors and considerations likely to shape Pickering's accessibility future to 2025 and will interact with Pickering's vision for dynamic growth discussed above. Some of these factors and considerations are outlined below:

- Demographics - Since 2012, the Canadian population age 15+ with disabilities has grown from 3.8 million to 6.2 million. The disability ratio also climbed, from 14% in 2012 to 22.3% in 2017. The economic impact is substantial with 22.3% of Canada's 15.2 million households containing at least one member living with a disability, the consumer spending of those households equals \$215.7 billion. This means that there are approximately 21,000 people, or more, in Pickering currently living with one or more disabilities. As the population ages and the full and longer-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are realized, we can expect the percentage of people with disabilities to increase significantly by 2025.
- 2019 AODA Review - The Honourable David C. Onley, Ontario's 28th Lieutenant Governor, was appointed to review the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and conducted public consultations in 2018. The 2019 Report presented Mr. Onley's numerous recommendations to the Government of Ontario for improvements to the AODA. Among Mr. Onley's candid observations were the following:
 - "For most disabled persons, Ontario is not a place of opportunity but one of countless, dispiriting, soul-crushing barriers."
 - "We (people with disabilities) are the only minority group in our society that faces blatant, overt discrimination and whose civil rights are infringed upon every day from multiple directions."
 - "The message is: you don't belong here, we don't want you here and, while we won't say it out loud, we will make it clear by our design barriers that this place is not for you or for any of your kind."

City of Pickering Five Year Accessibility Plan 2021-2025

- COVID-19 Pandemic - The COVID-19 pandemic has arisen unexpectedly in 2020, has had a profound impact on almost every aspect of life, and seems destined to unpredictably shape Pickering's future, well into the timeframe of the 2021-2025 Five Year Accessibility Plan. A few specific impacts of the pandemic include:
 - According to recent and ongoing research by the Durham Abilities Centre consequences of the pandemic for people with disabilities are increased physical and mental health challenges; rising stress levels; social isolation; and, financial uncertainty, among others.
 - Social distancing and virtual communication have become the norm.
 - For survivors of COVID-19, long-hauler symptoms of the pandemic are anticipated to create a new range of disabilities such as impairments of lung capacity. A long period of physical inactivity during the pandemic is likely to have a number of negative health outcomes for everyone.
 - Most municipalities have been negatively impacted financially and operationally by the pandemic. (Pickering has resumed its planning for anticipated growth and is moving forward with a significant Accessibility Capital Budget Plan for 2021 to 2025. (see Appendix))
 - COVID-19 has expedited the development, refinement and user acceptance of a number of technologies that are supportive of accessibility such as videoconferencing, real-time captioning and translation.
- Research - Following a pandemic-induced hiatus, the Pickering Football Club (PFC) has resumed its research into barriers to recreation and sports programs; causes of social isolation and inactivity for marginalized groups including people with disabilities; and impacts of exclusion on physical and mental health. Based on previous programming, partnerships, and research, PFC has identified a number of community groups who remain isolated from recreational opportunities due to barriers including: facility and program accessibility, transportation, cultural awareness & sensitivity, and finances, just to name a few. Increasingly, physical activity levels among Ontarian's are declining due to age, ability, time, availability, cost etc., while priority populations continue to experience barriers that reduce access and participation.
- Service and Support Animals Initiative (SSAI) - The SSAI is an ongoing joint effort led by the City of Pickering's Accessibility Advisory Committee, with partners that include:
 - the City of Pickering and the Pickering Library;
 - the Ontario Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility;
 - Aequum Global Access Inc.;
 - the Inclusive Design Research Centre (IDRC) of OCAD University; and,
 - a broad-based network of professionals in accessibility, business, and governance.

The SSAI's purpose is to collaboratively:

City of Pickering Five Year Accessibility Plan 2021-2025

- identify prominent issues around service and support animals in the community – including challenges to businesses, municipalities, and other client-facing organizations – to include barriers that regularly face users of service animals;
- respond with co-designed recommendations addressing the identified challenges and barriers;
- provide formal resources for stakeholders and the community, as drawn from an Innovation Lab results and other consultative research and outcomes; and.
- educate, using the developed resources through public awareness, access and forums.

The SSAI plans to publish a Monograph (research report) and hold public forums in autumn of 2021 to provide:

- recommendations for current best practices for businesses, municipalities, and other organizations;
 - further problem identification, clarification, and recommended responses; and.
 - increase stakeholder and public awareness.
- Grants - In 2020 and 2021, as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, a number of high value federal and provincial grant opportunities have been announced to advance accessibility/inclusion through focused projects including: social isolation of vulnerable children & youth; and infrastructure renewal. More such grant opportunities are anticipated through the period ending in 2025.
 - Networks - The Ontario Network of Accessibility Professionals (ONAP) and other Durham Region municipalities continue to collaborate in identifying accessibility issues and successful practices.
 - Private Sector Innovation - A handful of forward-looking private sector builders, boards of trade, and other organizations continue to pioneer innovations in accessible residential accessibility.
 - Other jurisdictions - Other Canadian and foreign jurisdictions are actively developing accessibility legislation, regulations and policies and are pioneering best practices and technologies that are helping to shape the inclusion landscape. As an example, U.S. residential accessibility standards are far more rigorous than the Ontario Building Code.
 - Adaptive and Other Technologies - Adaptive and other technologies are continuously emerging that promise to benefit accessibility. For example, artificial intelligence software is becoming available to aerially map and inventory City infrastructure and readily assess accessibility deficiencies/opportunities for improvement.

- Surveys - New national public opinion data on disability, accessibility, and inclusion was released in November 2021.² This new data outlines how people with disabilities continue to face barriers to employment and how Canadians are more likely to support organizations that have specific Diversity, Equity & Inclusion policies that focus on disability. Some of the key highlights include:
 - 91% of Canadians say that it's unacceptable that people with physical disabilities are underemployed because of workplace barriers.
 - 40% of people with disabilities say companies fall short when it comes to hiring those with disabilities. This increases to 55% for 18- to 34-year olds with a disability.
 - Nine in ten (92% of) Canadians agree that taxpayer-funded projects should be held to the highest accessibility standards.

Accessibility Standards & Best Practices

Ontario's Legislative, Regulatory and Policy Context³

Ontario Human Rights Code (OHRC) and Ableism Policy

Among Ontario's numerous laws, the Ontario Human Rights Code has "primacy". This means that Ontario laws, with a few exceptions, must follow the Human Rights Code.

The Code protects people from discrimination and harassment under the ground of "disability" in the "social areas" of employment, services, goods, facilities, housing, contracts and membership in trade and vocational associations. This means that people with disabilities have the right to equal treatment, which includes the right to accessible workplaces, schools, public transit, health and social services, restaurants, shops and housing, among other areas. The Preamble to the Code emphasizes the importance of creating a climate of understanding and mutual respect for the dignity and worth of each person, so that each person can contribute fully to the development and well-being of the community. The Ontario Code protects people in Ontario with disabilities from discrimination and harassment under the ground of "disability."

Organizations have a legal obligation under the Code to not discriminate against people with disabilities, and to eliminate discrimination when it happens. These obligations apply in situations where discrimination is direct and the result of a person's internal

² . By the Angus Reid Institute in partnership with the Rick Hansen Foundation - Please find the full research report [here](#).

³ See the 2019 Legislative Review of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* by the Honourable David C. Onley at <https://www.ontario.ca/page/2019-legislative-review-accessibility-ontarians-disabilities-act-2005>

stereotypes or prejudices. They also apply when discrimination is indirect and may exist within and across institutions because of laws, policies and unconscious practices.

Organizations and institutions operating in Ontario have a legal duty to take steps to prevent and respond to breaches of the Code. Employers, housing providers, service providers and other responsible parties must make sure they maintain accessible, inclusive, discrimination and harassment-free environments that respect human rights.

The Ontario Human Rights Code's (OHRC's) Policy on Ableism and Discrimination Based on Disability is intended to supplement, elaborate on, and clarify the Ontario Human Rights Code by providing extensive, clear, user-friendly guidance on how to assess, handle and resolve human rights matters related to disability.

"Ableism" refers to attitudes in society that devalue and limit the potential of persons with disabilities. Ableism may be defined as a belief system, analogous to racism, sexism or ageism that sees persons with disabilities as being less worthy of respect and consideration, less able to contribute and participate, or of less inherent value than others. Ableism may be conscious or unconscious, and may be embedded in institutions, systems or the broader culture of a society. It can limit the opportunities of persons with disabilities and reduce their inclusion in the life of their communities.

Ontario's 2016 policy Ableism aims to assist organizations and institutions, such as the City of Pickering, to better understand and appropriately discharge responsibilities under the Ontario Human Rights Code. The OHRC's policies reflect its interpretation of the Code, and set out standards, guidelines and best practice examples for how individuals, service providers, housing providers, employers and others should act to ensure equality for all Ontarians. The OHRC's policy on ableism and discrimination based on disability provides practical guidance on the legal rights and responsibilities set out in the Code as they relate to the ground of disability.

The 2016 policy will assist organizations to better understand and appropriately discharge their responsibilities under the Code. This policy will help organizations:

- understand their rights and obligations under the Code;
- design their facilities, policies, and procedures inclusively;
- respond to accommodation requests;
- address complaints related to disability; and,
- find further resources.

The policy is intended to provide clear, user-friendly guidance on how to assess, handle and resolve human rights matters related to disability; for example, the following guidance is provided on "appropriate accommodations":

- In addition to designing inclusively and removing barriers, organizations must respond to individual requests for accommodation. The duty to accommodate

requires that the most appropriate accommodation be determined and provided, unless this causes undue hardship.

- Accommodation is considered appropriate if it results in equal opportunity to enjoy the same level of benefits and privileges experienced by others or if it is proposed or adopted for the purpose of achieving equal opportunity, and meets the individual's disability-related needs. The most appropriate accommodation is one that most: respects dignity, responds to a person's individualized needs and allows for integration and full participation.
- Human rights case law makes it clear that the purpose of the Code is to accommodate a person's needs, not their preferences. If there is a choice between two accommodations that respond equally to the person's needs in a dignified way, then the accommodation provider is entitled to select the one that is less expensive or less disruptive to the organization.
- The accommodation process is a shared responsibility. Everyone involved should co-operatively engage in the process, share information and consider potential accommodation solutions. Organizations and persons responsible for accommodation are not, as a rule, expected to accommodate disabilities they are unaware of.

For the City of Pickering, policies, practices, job-specific training and accommodations regarding employment; receiving goods, services and using facilities; housing; and contracts will be informed by clarifications to the Code that the 2016 policy provides.

[Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act \(AODA\)](#)

In 2005, the Government of Ontario passed the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)*, which requires that Ontario be an accessible province by 2025. The AODA is legislation that establishes a process for developing and enforcing accessibility standards. Accessibility standards are regulations that government, businesses, non-profits and public sector organizations must follow to become more accessible.

The AODA immediately impacts those with restrictions due to age, mental, physical or intellectual disabilities; however, the standards outlined in the AODA will affect everyone in one way or another. For example, an automatic door designed for persons with disabilities could also benefit a parent pushing a stroller or someone with their hands full. At some point in time, everyone will require assistance due to a temporary or permanent disability.

Five standards have been established by Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) under the AODA. The standards help organizations to identify and remove barriers to improve accessibility in the following areas:

Customer Service

The first standard, on Customer Service, came into force on January 1, 2008. Its provisions were phased in, taking effect for the provincial government and the broader

public sector in 2010 and the private sector (business and non-profits) in 2012. This was also the first standard to undergo the mandatory five-year review, which began in September 2013 and resulted in a revised standard that took effect July 1, 2016.

The standard applies to all providers of goods, services or facilities. It requires them to develop, implement and maintain policies for serving people with disabilities that are consistent with the principles of dignity and independence, integration, equal opportunity and communication that takes disability into account. Among other requirements, providers must train staff and volunteers in accessible customer service, create a process for receiving and responding to feedback, and permit service animals and support persons to enter the premises.

The next three standards were combined in the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) that took effect on July 1, 2011. Again, the requirements were phased in, though coming into effect over a much longer timeframe, between 2011 and 2021. The standards are:

Information & Communications

These standards address the way information is created and communicated. Organizations are required to provide accessible formats and communication supports on request. The standard also covers such areas as websites and web content, educational and training materials and resources, educator training and public libraries.

Accessible websites and web content - Designated public sector organizations and large organizations are obliged to make their internet websites and web content conform with the World Wide Web Consortium Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0, initially at Level A and increasing to Level AA by January 1, 2021, other than live captions, and pre-recorded audio descriptions. At WCAG level AA, it is no longer sufficient to indicate that alternate formats will be provided on request.

Employment

This standard supports accessibility throughout the employment relationship. Among other provisions, it requires employers to: notify employees and the public that recruitment processes are accessible; accommodate the needs of job applicants on request; provide work-related information in accessible formats; provide customized emergency response information; and establish a process for developing individual accommodation plans. It also calls for accommodation in return to work, performance management, career development and redeployment processes.

Transportation

This standard includes an array of policy, operational and technical requirements to prevent and remove barriers in both conventional public passenger services and specialized transportation services for persons with disabilities. Among the many areas affected are: accessibility planning, equipment and training; pre-boarding and on-board announcements; fares; priority seating and storage of mobility aids. Obligations are also

imposed on municipalities that license taxicabs and on school boards and other public sector organizations that offer transportation services.

In Pickering, transit is a regional service and accessibility requirements are outlined in the Region of Durham's Accessibility Plan. The City of Pickering is, however, responsible for ensuring that the requirements for accessible taxicabs are met.

Design of Public Spaces (Built Environment)

A further standard, covering parts of the Built Environment, was added to the IASR on January 1, 2013. Applicable to newly constructed or redeveloped public-use areas, it was phased in between 2015 and 2018. It covers such public spaces and features as recreational trails and beach access routes, outdoor tables for eating, outdoor play spaces, outdoor sidewalks or walkways, off-street parking, waiting areas, service counters and queuing guides.

The Design of Public Spaces Standard focuses on removing barriers in areas not covered by the Ontario Building Code such as playgrounds, on and off-street parking, recreational trails and service counters. It applies to new construction or re-construction of existing spaces. It does not require organizations to retrofit in order to be compliant.

General Provisions

In addition to the above standards, the IASR contains general requirements concerning: accessibility policies, multi-year accessibility plans, accessibility criteria and features in procurement, accessible self-service kiosks, and training of employees and volunteers on the IASR standards and the Ontario Human Rights Code.

As of July 1, 2016, the revised Customer Service standard was folded into the IASR, bringing all AODA standards into a single regulation in order to make the requirements easier to follow and implement.

If accessibility standards under the AODA fall short of requirements under the Ontario Human Rights Code in a given situation, the requirements of the Ontario Human Rights Code will prevail.

The Ontario Building Code (OBC)

Beyond the AODA's Design of Public Spaces standard, other requirements for the Built Environment are found in Ontario's Building Code, which has included barrier-free design provisions since 1990. The Ontario Building Code (OBC) regulates most aspects of the construction of buildings and other structures within the Province of Ontario.

Enhanced accessibility standards covering most new construction and extensive renovations of buildings were incorporated into the Building Code effective January 1, 2015. The amendments update requirements in such areas as: visual fire alarms and smoke alarms; elevator access between stories in most buildings; barrier-free path of travel throughout buildings, including power doors at entrances to a wider range of

City of Pickering Five Year Accessibility Plan 2021-2025

buildings; and the minimum number of visitable suites in apartment buildings, which was raised from 10 per cent to 15 per cent.

The Building Code does not apply to existing buildings where no work is planned, and most accessibility requirements do not affect houses.

Other Jurisdictions

Legislation from other jurisdictions may sometimes provide helpful insights into accessibility/inclusion issues in Ontario. The Government of Canada, several other Canadian provinces, and the United States have taken steps to implement accessibility/inclusion legislation as indicated below:

- Federal Government of Canada:
 - *The Accessible Canada Act: An Act to Ensure a Barrier-free Canada, 2019*
 - The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms
 - *The Canadian Human Rights Act*
 - *The Employment Equity Act*
 - Standard on Web Accessibility
- Provincial:
 - *The Accessibility for Manitobans Act, 2013*
 - *Nova Scotia Accessibility Act, 2017*
 - Quebec's Act to Secure Handicapped Persons in the Exercise of their Rights with a View to Achieving Social, School and Workplace Integration, 2004
 - Proposed *Accessible British Columbia Act, (Bill 6, 2021)*
- United States
 - *Americans With Disabilities Act, 1990/2008*

Best Practices

Since Ontario's legislation and regulations relating to accessibility often specify minimum compliance requirements, the City of Pickering has often found that going above and beyond the letter of the law and seeking best practices makes practical sense in the pursuit of an inclusive community.

For example, the David C. Onley Award for Leadership in Accessibility recognizes Ontarians who have gone above and beyond to improve accessibility for people with disabilities. The City of Pickering has been recognized 3 times with Onley Champion Awards for the following initiatives:

- 2016 - The DRP Children's Games Partnership
- 2017 - Renewal of its Delaney Arena
- 2018 - Canada 150 Youth Forum: A Confederation Journey 1867-2067

Other best practices are actively shared among Pickering's various accessibility partners (discussed below), especially among members of the Ontario Network of Accessibility Professionals (ONAP). A large and growing international community of

interest in accessibility and inclusion is an ongoing online source for innovative thought, practices and technologies.

Pickering's Accessibility Resources

Organizational Changes

Since the appointment of Marisa Carpino, to the position of Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) effective February 1, 2021, a fulsome review of the Community Services Department has been completed and resulting changes have begun on June 7, 2021.

The Community Services Department has grown over the past several years to become the largest Department in the City of Pickering employing approximately 65% of the City's workforce and managing approximately 40% of the City's net operating budget. In its prior form, the Department's responsibilities included Recreation Services & Programs, Cultural Programs & Special Events, Pickering Museum Village, Marketing, Accessibility, Facilities Capital Projects, Facilities Maintenance & Operations, Corporate Security and Public Works (Parks, Property Maintenance, Roads, and Fleet). While this structure enabled the successful delivery of services through collaboration and coordination, a review was necessary in order to assess its long-term effectiveness.

The new CAO initiated the Departmental review process with the support of the Human Resources Department. This process included the research and review of municipal best practices, 1:1 meetings with the Community Services Department non-union management team for their input and insight, and a thoughtful consideration of the City's future growth.

The following changes have been implemented to improve efficiency and effectiveness and prepare the City for the future. The Community Services Department will be split into two Departments: 1) Operations Department & 2) Community Services Department.

The Operations Department will be comprised of:

- Public Works (Parks, Property Maintenance, Roads, Fleet). This work unit will remain unchanged.
- Facilities Capital Projects. This work unit will focus on the City's facilities capital asset management program, new construction, renovation, retrofits, renovations and repairs of the City's facility inventory.
- Corporate Security. This work unit will remain unchanged.
- Energy Conservation & Management. This will be a new addition to the Department achieved by moving a vacant Energy Conservation position from the City Development Department to the Operations Department.

The Community Services Department will be comprised of:

City of Pickering Five Year Accessibility Plan 2021-2025

- Recreation Services. This work unit will focus on recreation and leisure programs for pre-school, children, youth, adults and seniors, accessibility, grants and community safety.
- Administration Services. This is a newly created work unit that will focus on the administrative functions of the department that are relied upon for the successful delivery of programs, memberships and services. These functions include facility booking, sports field booking, parks booking, arena booking, court booking, program registration, memberships, customer service, marketing, child care services and the leisure guide.
- Fitness & Aquatics. This is a newly created work unit that will focus on fitness & aquatic programs and services.
- Cultural Services. This newly created work unit will oversee cultural services & special events, Pickering Museum Village & heritage, arts and grants.
- Facilities Maintenance. This work unit will be responsible for the cleaning, operation and daily set-ups of City facilities, pool maintenance and arena operations.

Further information regarding the organization structure and operations of the City of Pickering can be found at Pickering.ca.

[2021 Approved Capital Budget and 2022 to 2025 Capital Forecast](#)

The City of Pickering's Accessibility Capital Budget for 2021 and the 2022-2025 Capital Budget Forecast was approved by City Council in May 2021 and plans for capital investments exceeding \$20 million for accessibility-focused projects over five years. (It should be noted that only the 2021 funds are formally approved, and that the balance of years are a forecast projection only.) see Appendix.

[The Pickering Accessibility Advisory Committee \(PAAC\)](#)

As outlined in the AODA, the council of every municipality having a population of not less than 10,000 must establish an accessibility advisory committee.

The Pickering Accessibility Advisory Committee (PAAC) advises and assists the City of Pickering in creating and facilitating strategies for the development and maintenance of a barrier-free community. Each year the PAAC normally holds ten public meetings on the third Wednesday of each month except for July and August. At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Committee meetings rapidly, and successfully, adapted to a virtual format.

Both during and between scheduled meetings, PAAC is highly active and is regularly involved in awareness raising; development and implementation of municipal accessibility policies, standards and providing advice on implementation; consultation and collaboration on accessibility issues and projects; as well as site plan application reviews.

City of Pickering Five Year Accessibility Plan 2021-2025

The Pickering Accessibility Advisory Committee maintains a full authorized complement of 10, highly-qualified, diverse, volunteer members who are appointed by City Council. As well, Ajax-Pickering Board of Trade provides a highly-qualified and engaged representative as a non-voting member of the Committee. As required by the AODA, the majority of PAAC members live with one or more disabilities. Importantly, all PAAC members are competitively selected by Council for their strong interest in, and commitment to, inclusion as well as for notable expertise and insights into accessibility and to achieve a balance of differing abilities.

At the time of writing this plan, the Pickering Accessibility Advisory Committee members were:

- Peter Bashaw
- Saima Fatima
- Daniel Hughes
- Glenn Lang
- Tammy Lyle-Gravlev
- Anthony Lue
- John McLellan, Ajax-Pickering Board of Trade Representative
- Phyllis Milton
- Anna Taverna
- Megan Thorpe Ross
- David Wysocki

City staff includes a permanent part-time Accessibility Coordinator who facilitates meetings of the PAAC and Accessibility Core Staff Team (ACST) to identify, discuss and advance solutions to municipal issues with respect to accessibility. The PAAC attends City Council to present its annual report and business plan to the City in the spring of each year and leverages this opportunity to profile the Committee's leading accessibility concerns, identify opportunities for accessibility improvements, and to maintain its positive working relationship with Council and City Staff. Copies of PAAC's annual report and business plan are posted to Pickering.ca along with the City's Five Year Accessibility Plan(s).

Guests of the Committee frequently include Pickering community members, representatives of community partner organizations, subject matter experts, and representatives of the staff of the City of Pickering. Informal contact is maintained through the Accessibility Coordinator with former members of the PAAC (alumnae) who are often consulted on accessibility matters under consideration by the City.

[The Pickering Accessibility Core Staff Team \(ACST\)](#)

The Accessibility Core Staff Team (ACST) provides professional expertise and technical support to the municipality and to the PAAC. The ACST ensures interdepartmental cooperation to advance accessibility initiatives and solutions. Representatives from City of Pickering departments

City of Pickering Five Year Accessibility Plan 2021-2025

- assist in the identification, removal and prevention of barriers to access for people with disabilities;
- determine appropriate work plans for their area of responsibility; and,
- attend PAAC meetings as required.

The ACST meets monthly, up to 10 times annually, to discuss/resolve accessibility issues and to provide updated information on the City's various accessibility initiatives.

During the development of the Five Year Plan, the Committee reviewed the legislative requirements of the AODA and the Accessibility Standards developed under the AODA. In consultation with other staff in their area of responsibility, they develop action plans to meet or exceed those legislative requirements.

As implementation of the Plan proceeds, the Committee reports on what progress has been made and reviews the legislative requirements and updates. They also consider recommendations made by the Accessibility Advisory Committee and other members of the community to determine what changes or additions may be required to the Plan.

Members of the Accessibility Core Staff Team, at the time of writing this Five Year plan are:

- Vince Plouffe, Manager, Facilities Capital Projects
- Scott Booker, Manager, Capital Projects & Infrastructure
- Sharon Milton, Manager, Recreation Services
- Arnold Mostert, Manager, Landscape & Parks Development
- Isabelle Janton, Senior Planner, Site Planning
- Jaclyn San Antonio, Senior Advisor, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion
- TBA, Coordinator, Parks Infrastructure
- Nancy Johnstone, Website Coordinator
- David Janveaux, Human Resources Associate
- Muhammad Rafeh, Pickering Public Library
- Timothy Higgins, Accessibility Coordinator

Partnerships

The City of Pickering's Accessibility Coordinator is a member of the Ontario Network of Accessibility Professionals (ONAP), a community of interest comprised of approximately 300 public sector accessibility professionals working collectively to remove barriers in municipalities, hospitals, universities and colleges and in other such public sector organizations across the province through the sharing of information and experiences.

City staff also work in partnership with the Region of Durham and the eight area municipalities to collaboratively identify and eliminate barriers to accessibility, to and to share best practices.

The City of Pickering has established a collaborative community of interest, networks and partnerships on accessibility/inclusion with organizations such as:

City of Pickering Five Year Accessibility Plan 2021-2025

- Ajax Pickering Board of Trade
- Altona Forest Stewardship Committee
- Campbell Children's School
- Centre for Accessible Sport & Play - authority on inclusive recreation & sport
- CNIB
- Durham Master Gardeners – provides program opportunities for isolated children & youth
- Durham Regional Police – lead for the DRP Children's Games; youth and kids programming
- Durham Regional Transit and Metrolinx - providers of general and special transit services
- Ecole Ronald-Marion - liaison with French-Language community in Pickering
- Grandview Kids – community expert re. inclusion of children with disabilities
- March of Dimes
- Ontario Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility – funds the Service & Support Animal Initiative
- Parks Canada, Rouge National Urban Park
- Participation House Durham - helps individuals with disabilities acquire work skills and pursue employment
- PFLAG – expert community leader in programming for LGBTQ2S+ youth
- Pickering Age Friendly Initiative
- Pickering Anti Black Racism Taskforce (PABRT)
- Pickering Football Club – expertise in inclusive recreation & sport and research
- Pickering Indigenous Relationship Building Circle - liaison to Indigenous communities
- Pickering Public Library – innovative mobile and virtual library programming
- Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA)

Pickering's Accessibility Priorities - 2021–2025

The City of Pickering's long term vision is to ensure that Pickering is a caring and responsive community known for its commitment to equity, inclusion and accessibility as well as its achievements in these areas. With the support of City Council, management, staff, the PAAC, volunteers and a broad range of community partners, barrier removal will continue to be a priority in Pickering. Accessibility is everyone's responsibility and will be incorporated by design into the work of all City Departments.

The 2021-2025 Five Year Accessibility Plan includes both new and continuing initiatives that will help meet Pickering's commitment to an inclusive community where all residents and visitors have access to City services, programs and facilities in a manner that is integrated and promotes dignity and independence.

In 2021-2025, the City of Pickering will continue to address the areas of accessibility outlined in the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation and will also consider barriers to accessibility more broadly, and with reference to best practices and emergent opportunities, seek innovative, inclusive solutions. In addition to the Standards under the IASR, the City is committed to going beyond the legislated requirements, where feasible, to ensure that barriers to accessibility are identified and addressed across the community.

Pickering's areas of priority include:

- City Center accessibility
- accessibility partnerships and collaboration
- service and support animals
- website accessibility
- mental and physical wellness, particularly through recreation and sports
- parks, playgrounds, pedestrian and cyclist corridors, sidewalks and trails
- accessible and affordable housing options
- accessible transportation
- community employment opportunities for people with disabilities
- signage and navigation

Future Actions - 2021-2025

General

As set out in the general requirements of the IASR the City of Pickering has established a statement of commitment, accessibility policies, and successive multi-year accessibility plans.

Outcomes

- Clear roles and accountability are established in support of accessibility at all levels and in all segments of the organization.
- The City of Pickering fosters a culture where everyone feels like they belong, that values and includes employees, residents and visitors living with disabilities.
- City employees, residents and visitors are aware of available resources and accommodations when accessing City programs, services and facilities.
- Employees are supported to identify barriers to accessibility and actively seek solutions to prevent and remove them.

Ongoing Goals

The following is a summary of the practices that will continue:

- demonstrating leadership in accessibility by meeting or exceeding requirements of provincial legislation;
- providing annual status updates on the City's multi-year accessibility plan through the PAAC to Council and posting on the City's website;
- being informed by the findings of David C. Onley's Report regarding the independent review of the implementation and enforcement of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act;
- promoting accessibility awareness within the City of Pickering, the community and its businesses;
- through PAAC, playing an active role in Pickering's community events and celebrations such as Canada Day and Remembrance Day.
- through PAAC, monitoring local, provincial, national and international emerging accessibility legislation, regulations, policies, best practices, products and services and considering relevant adaptations for use in Pickering;
- collaborating and consulting with regional, provincial, national and international accessibility professionals and advocates, such as the Ontario Network of Accessibility Professionals (ONAP), to stay abreast of emerging accessibility issues, successful practices and opportunities to collaborate;
- ensuring City of Pickering purchases meet accessibility design criteria and include accessibility features; and,
- providing training on the AODA and the Ontario Human Rights Code to all new employees, volunteers, anyone who participates in developing City policies or provides goods, services or facilities on behalf of the City of Pickering.

2021-2025 Goals

- seeking continuous improvements to the corporate accessibility governance structure and accountability framework to oversee the implementation of the multi-year accessibility plan; for example, through engagement of additional City departments in the ACST;

City of Pickering Five Year Accessibility Plan 2021-2025

- promoting awareness of, and advising on, information and resources for people with disabilities needing help during pandemic including: emergency supports; virtual management of anxiety and mental health; and human rights of people with disabilities;
- promoting awareness of, and advising on City/Regional COVID-19 initiatives such as Pickering's partnership with Grandview Kids to provide/expand respite programs;
- consulting with Pickering residents on a range of accessibility-related topics over time, using the City's new "Let's Talk, Pickering" software;
- monitoring local, regional, provincial, national and international learning and networking and partnership opportunities related to accessibility; and,
- through PAAC, reviewing and providing input to the City of Pickering's bi-annual Accessibility Compliance Reports to the Ontario Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility. The next accessibility compliance report is scheduled for submission to the Regulator by December 31st, 2021.

Customer Service

The Accessible Customer Service Standards under the Integrated Accessibility Regulation require the City of Pickering to provide accessible public services for people with disabilities and to ensure that policies and procedures are in place to support this requirement.

Outcomes

- An accessible Pickering that includes ensuring people with disabilities receive quality programs and services in a timely manner, supported by effective policies, procedures, tools and resources that promote accessibility in customer service; and,
- dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity for everyone living with a disability.

Ongoing Goals

The following is a summary of the practices that will continue:

- monitoring customer service to ensure the City of Pickering is maintaining and continuously seeking opportunities for improving upon the level of accessibility we provide in programs, services and facilities;
- training staff, volunteers and those who provide goods, services or facilities on the City's behalf on an ongoing basis;
- providing job-specific inclusive recreation program training;
- providing notice of service disruptions;
- through Pickering's various strategic plans, embracing accessibility as an important element to ensure an inclusive, healthy and safe community;

City of Pickering Five Year Accessibility Plan 2021-2025

- presenting annual accessibility awards to residents and businesses who advance accessibility and model inclusion in the community;
- through PAAC, providing ongoing advice on accessibility issues/priorities as well as a formal annual report to Pickering City Council;
- collaborating with Pickering's Accessibility Core Staff Team, ONAP, the Ajax Pickering Board of Trade, the Pickering's Age Friendly initiative, as well as other partners to advance accessibility and inclusion;
- working with community partners to pursue grant opportunities that provide accessible/inclusive programs and services; and,
- providing support to, promoting and attending the Annual Durham Regional Police Children's Games.

2021-2025 Goals

- developing and consulting the PAAC on a 2022 election accessibility plan to consider potential voting locations; ensuring forms and signage are accessible; and, training of election officials;
- supporting the PAAC's Service & Support Animals Initiative (SSAI) in completing a Monograph, and a launch event to rollout findings of the SSAI study in the autumn of 2021 as well as subsequent implementation of recommendations;
- studying and implementing, as appropriate, recommendations from the Pickering Football Club's (PFC) research project, funded by an Ontario Trillium Grant, to investigate barriers associated with recreational and sport opportunities in Pickering and Durham Region and the impacts of isolation on people with disabilities; and,
- exploring assistive/adaptive devices and software that make City programs and services more accessible including charging stations for mobility devices, captioning, residential elevators, new-wave wheelchairs, etc.

Information & Communications

The Information and Communications Standard under the Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation requires the City to communicate and provide information in ways that are accessible to the public and that are accessible to people with disabilities.

Outcomes

- enhanced accessibility as it relates to communication supports, formats, and websites and web content;
- City staff are equipped with the appropriate training, tools and resources to effectively develop information and communications in accessible formats; and,
- the City will support the effective delivery of programs and services by delivering information and communications in accessible formats to all City employees, residents, visitors and customers.

Ongoing Goals

The following is a summary of the practices that will continue to be in place:

- achieving and maintaining accessible websites and web content;
- ensuring documents and other content posted online are in accessible formats;
- reviewing documents and City templates to ensure they are accessible;
- providing training and tools for staff to create/remediate accessible documents;
- maintaining a process for receiving and responding to feedback in ways that are accessible to people with disabilities;
- notifying the public about the availability of accessible formats and communication supports;
- providing accessible formats and communication supports;
- providing emergency information in alternative formats; and,
- completing and implementing a way-finding study for City facilities.

2021-2025 Goals

- continue implementation of the City's strategy to meet WCAG 2.0 Level AA requirements and maintain compliance;
- maintaining an ongoing awareness of the City's progress to establish and maintain website accessibility commensurate with heightened (WCAG 2.0 Level AA) AODA Information and Communication standards;
- developing resources for employees to support accessible public engagement and consultation;
- expanding digital content offered by the City of Pickering Library; and,
- improving signage and website accessibility information to enhance the navigation of paths/trails and other City properties.

Employment

The Employment Standard under the Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation (IASR) sets out accessibility requirements that the City must follow to support the recruitment and accommodation of employees.

Outcomes

- Employment practices and workplaces are accessible for new and existing employees with disabilities.
- Accommodation practices ensure people with disabilities are able to participate fully and meaningfully as City employees.

Ongoing Goals

The following is a summary of practices that will continue:

City of Pickering Five Year Accessibility Plan 2021-2025

- notifying applicants about the availability of accessibility accommodations in the recruitment process;
- advising successful applicants about the availability of accommodations for employees with disabilities;
- making policies on accommodating and supporting employees with disabilities available to all employees;
- providing accessible formats and/or communication supports to employees with disabilities who require it;
- documenting individual accommodation plans for employees with disabilities;
- providing individualized emergency response information for persons with disabilities;
- offering a return-to-work process for employees with disabilities;
- providing accessibility training to new hires, including full time, part time and students; and,
- providing workplace mental health and wellness training and supports for all staff.

2021-2025 Goals

- training staff and providing staff support with respect to emergent mental health issues;
- continuing to regularly review corporate policies and practices in light of the pandemic or other emergent issues to ensure applicants and employees with disabilities receive the appropriate support;
- providing training to all staff regarding the City of Pickering's Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Strategy; and,
- seeking opportunities to provide meaningful employment opportunities to people with disabilities.

Public Spaces and Facilities

The Design of Public Spaces Standard under the IASR requires the City of Pickering to ensure that newly-constructed or significantly renovated public spaces are accessible. The City also complies with the Ontario Building Code's requirements for accessibility in the built environment, often exceeding these requirements.

Outcomes

- improved accessibility of City facilities and public spaces including incorporating accessibility retrofits during renovations; and,
- prevention and removal of accessibility barriers within City facilities for new construction and redevelopments.

Ongoing Goals

The following is a summary of the practices that will continue:

City of Pickering Five Year Accessibility Plan 2021-2025

- consulting the Pickering Accessibility Advisory Committee, the public and people with disabilities prior to redeveloping or constructing new public spaces such as the City Centre Development Project and playgrounds;
- PAAC working in collaboration with City planning staff through an ongoing site plan application review process to encourage the proactive integration of accessibility considerations into City developments;
- PAAC consulting on the City's Signage & Wayfinding Program which is aimed at enabling individuals of all abilities to navigate efficiently through City of Pickering buildings;
- PAAC monitoring and providing accessibility advice regarding walkway reconstructions, sidewalk retrofits, new multi-use paths, installation of tactile plates at intersections, curb cuts, traffic light timing, parks, playgrounds, special event accessible parking, etc.;
- fostering/promoting/supporting submissions for local, regional, provincial and federal grants and awards to fund and profile Pickering's continued accessibility achievements;
- incorporating public consultations into existing development processes;
- implementing accessibility improvements as part of state-of-good-repair capital and maintenance programs;
- maintaining accessible elements in public spaces through monitoring and regularly planned preventative maintenance;
- responding to temporary disruptions when accessible elements in public spaces are not in working order by notifying the public and prioritizing remediation;
- exploring the installation of mobility device charging stations in new and redeveloped public spaces;
- increasing the number of accessible picnic tables at parks;
- enhancing the accessibility of new and redeveloped playgrounds;
- fulfilling requests for accessible pedestrian signals and installing them with all new traffic signals and replacements of existing traffic crossing signals;
- installing tactile walking surface indicators at all corners; and,
- incorporating accessibility into new builds and significant renovations for facilities, parks, playgrounds and trails.

2021-2025 Goals

- implementing the City of Pickering's 2021 Approved Capital Budget and 2022 to 2025 Capital Forecast which plans for capital investments exceeding \$20 million for accessibility focused projects over five years - see Appendix;
- designing and building a new Pickering City Centre to model excellence in accessible design;
- accessibility renovations to the Pickering Council Chambers, Pickering's center of municipal democracy;

City of Pickering Five Year Accessibility Plan 2021-2025

- renewing Pickering playgrounds based on community input regarding accessibility needs;
- consulting the Pickering Accessibility Advisory Committee, the public and people with disabilities on the City of Pickering Housing Strategy to address a general shortage of accessible and affordable housing for people with disabilities;
- PAAC collaborating with Parks Infrastructure on asset management, and the rehabilitation of City parks and trails to ensure accessible assets mirror the community's needs and model best practices;
- PAAC exploring the value of the City's tranquil parks and trails amid the stress-laden pandemic, and rising frequency of mental illness in the community;
- exploring artificial intelligence software to aerially map and inventory Pickering's infrastructure to readily assess accessibility deficiencies and opportunities for improvement;
- expanding audible intersections;
- enhancing accessibility of parks, pedestrian and cyclist corridors, sidewalks and trails, trail head signage etc.; and,
- exploring opportunities to improve site plan review processes such as more timely pre-consultation processes.

Transportation

The Transportation Standard under the Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation (IASR) sets out requirements to prevent and remove barriers to public transportation and to make public transportation and related services more accessible. In Pickering, transit is a regional service and accessibility requirements are outlined in the Region of Durham's Accessibility Plan. The City is, however; responsible for ensuring that the requirements for accessible taxicabs are met.

Outcomes

The City continues to support the development of transportation services for residents and visitors that are barrier-free especially with respect to accessible licensed taxi cabs operating in the municipality.

Ongoing Goals

The following is a summary of the practices that will continue to be in place to ensure that accessibility is routinely considered:

- collaboration with Durham Regional Transit (DRT) and Metrolinx to identify opportunities to improve transit accessibility and customer service for people with disabilities in Pickering;
- continuing PAAC member representation on the Metrolinx Accessibility Advisory Committee representing Durham Region;
- consulting on the adequacy of on-demand accessible taxicabs in the community;

City of Pickering Five Year Accessibility Plan 2021-2025

- monitoring taxi owners and operators in Pickering to ensure they are meeting the requirements of the regulation; and,
- monitoring regularly and obtaining feedback regarding accessible taxi on-demand availability and safety.

2021-2025 Goals

- through the AAC conducting an accessible taxicab review;
- collaborating with Metrolinx on the design and construction of the Durham-Scarborough Bus Rapid Transit Project to identify opportunities to improve transit accessibility and customer service for people with disabilities;
- working with other levels of government to ensure the new frequent rail service models excellence in accessibility;
- pursuing facility, service and operation improvements to enhance the universal design of the Go Transit system;
- integrating accessibility considerations in the design and implementation of a City cycling master plan; and,
- modeling accessibility best practices in the “walkable” public space design of the new Pickering City Centre.

Appendices

[2021 Approved Capital Budget and 2022 to 2025 Capital Forecast](#)