



## Recreation & Community Services Staff Report

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Report Title: Facilities Accessibility Audit  
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Reviewed By: Ann McArthur, Director of Recreation and Community Services  
Final Review: Senior Management Team

### Recommendation:

That the Council of the Township of Woolwich, considering Report R04-2024 respecting Facilities Accessibility Audit:

1. Receive this report for information purposes; and,
2. Continue to support efforts to meet, and where feasible, exceed Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act and Ontario Building Code standards to establish inclusive and accessible facilities.

### Background:

#### Legislation

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), passed in 2005 by the Province of Ontario, is a set of standards for accessibility related to goods, services, facilities, employment, accommodation and buildings. The intent of the Act, recognizing the history of discrimination against persons with disabilities, is:

- (a) developing, implementing and enforcing accessibility standards in order to achieve accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities with respect to goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures and premises on or before January 1, 2025; and

(b) providing for the involvement of persons with disabilities, of the Government of Ontario and of representatives of industries and of various sectors of the economy in the development of the accessibility standards.

AODA standards are outlined in the Design of Public Spaces, which describes ways to make communal spaces more accessible, most of which are outdoors, including:

- Recreational trails and beach access routes
- Outdoor public eating areas like rest stops or picnic areas
- Outdoor play spaces, like playgrounds in provincial parks and local communities
- Accessible parking (on and off street)
- Outdoor paths of travel, like sidewalks, ramps, stairs, curb ramps, rest areas and accessible pedestrian signals

Accessibility in Ontario is also informed by the Ontario Building Code (OBC) in addition to the Design of Public Spaces Standard (AODA). The OBC details the design of most indoors spaces.

The OBC standards became effective January 1, 2015, and the Design of Public Spaces Standard guidelines became effective January 1, 2016. In both cases, retrofits are not required to achieve compliance, however, both standards apply to Extensive Renovations or new construction.

The Ontario Building Code defines an Extensive Renovation as:

“Where existing interior walls or ceilings or floor assemblies or roof assemblies are substantially removed in an existing building and new interior walls, ceilings, floor assemblies or roof assemblies are installed in the building, structural and fire-resistance elements shall be constructed in compliance with the requirements of the other Parts.”

The Design of Public Spaces Standard applies as follows:

“Except as otherwise specified, this Part applies to public spaces that are newly constructed or redeveloped on and after the dates set out in the schedule in section 80.5 and that are covered by this Part.”

The target date for achieving compliance based on AODA standards is January 1, 2025.

### **2007 Facility Accessibility Audit**

In 2007, the Township awarded completion of an Accessibility Audit to the Herrington Group Ltd. The report included 25 Township facilities which were assessed through the lens of the newly legislated AODA guidelines, as well as other standards including the K-W Barrier Free Design Standards and Region of Waterloo Accessibility Checklist. Accessibility items were prioritized by the consultant, with significant works required to achieve compliance across all Township facilities.

## Ongoing Accessibility Efforts

Since completion of the 2007 Accessibility Audit, Recreation and Community Services has been utilizing this document, and updated legislative requirements, as a guide for making both Township facilities and outdoor spaces more accessible. The Township has not only focused on meeting standards, but exceeding requirements where there is a need. Creating more accessible spaces has been accomplished through both retrofits and new construction.

Funding has been allocated annually, typically through either capital or minor capital budgets, to accomplish accessibility retrofits of Township spaces. These projects include initiatives such as installing automatic door openers, grab bars, parking stall painting, etc., all in accordance with AODA and OBC standards.

Regarding new facility and outdoor space construction, accessibility is a primary focus of both new construction and planning. Examples include the design of outdoor spaces through development, construction of accessible amenities such as multi-use pathways and accessible playgrounds, and new facility construction.

Additionally, the Township continues to utilize the Grand River Accessibility Advisory Committee as a resource for reviewing and advising on ongoing accessibility efforts and capital projects.

## Comments:

### 2024 Accessibility Audit

Approved through the 2024 capital budget, Staff retained the Herrington Group Ltd. to complete an updated facilities accessibility audit of all Township facilities based on updated OBC and AODA standards. A total of 29 Township facilities were reviewed, including fire stations, administration buildings, park washrooms, and more. The review did not include outdoor spaces such as parkland or park amenities.

Slightly amended from the priority ranking system used in 2007, the 2024 priorities included the following:

Priority One — High - Immediate action recommended.

- Requirements to immediately comply with the AODA's Design of Public Spaces Standard

Priority Two — Medium - Short-term action recommended (within 2-5 years)

- Risk of creating or maintaining hazards to life or public safety

Priority Three — Low - Mid-term action recommended (5-10 years)

- Compliance with the new requirements of the Ontario Building Code with Extensive Renovation
- Maintenance items to be completed by Township staff.

#### Priority 4 – Considerations for future planning (10+ years)

- Accessibility considerations to improve overall accessibility needs and achieve Facility Accessibility Design Standards compliance.
- Suggestions for consideration in future planning and/or capital projects

In summary, 0 Priority One items, 39 Priority Two items, 185 Priority Three items, 120 Priority Four, and 340 Compliant items were identified through the audit. Results varied from facility to facility, largely dependent on the age of the facility and design standards in place during construction.

From an accessibility legislation compliance perspective, the Township is compliant. However, reoccurring themes that would improve accessibility included relocation of washroom grab bars and accessories, and parking stall painting corrections at facilities. Next steps for the Township are to continue to allocate funds through the operating and capital budgets to improve accessibility, through both retrofits of older facilities and through new construction.

#### **Interdepartmental Impacts:**

None.

#### **Financial Impacts:**

No immediate financial impacts. Staff intend to budget for future accessibility items in 2025 and beyond, as well as apply for accessibility related grants when released.

#### **Strategic Plan Impacts:**

- Empower communities to be adaptable and engaged: *Expand tools and avenues for conversation to bolster inclusivity and community engagement.*

The Accessibility Audit will enable the Township to plan for and continue to strive towards creating more inclusive and accessible facilities and opportunities for users and residents.

- Maintain an innovative customer service focus: *We will be customer-centric in all that we do and continue to push ourselves to find new innovative ways to serve the public.*

The Accessibility Audit not only addresses compliance needs, but provides recommendations for exceeding legislative requirements, further enhancing customer service at our facilities.

**Conclusion:**

That Council receive this report for information purposes and support continued efforts to meet, and where feasible, exceed Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act and Ontario Building Code standards to create inclusive and accessible facilities.

**Attachments:**

1. Township of Woolwich Accessibility Audit Final Report