

2014 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan

**BRING ON
THE VOTE**
Ajax Municipal Election



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*Alternative formats of this
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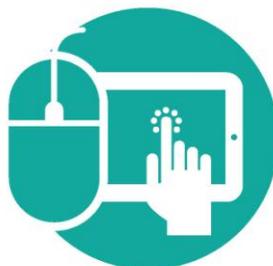


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1. INTRODUCTION

This plan will address the specific accessibility requirements in relation to the 2014 Municipal Election in the Town of Ajax.

On December 17, 2009, Bill 212 was enacted to amend various provisions within the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* (MEA). These amendments came into force and effect on January 1, 2010. In relation to accessibility issues, a number of provisions are mandated for the 2014 Municipal Election. The Clerk responsible for an election must:

- Have regard for the needs of electors, candidates and election officials with disabilities
- Ensure that voting places are accessible to persons with disabilities
- Submit a report to Council about the identification, removal and prevention of election barriers that affect persons with disabilities

The Town of Ajax has made great efforts in promoting a barrier free community. This commitment has been echoed in the recent implementation of accessibility standards to improve the provision of customer service to people with disabilities. In an effort to ensure that the 2014 Municipal Election is consistent with the core principles of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, this planning document was developed in advance of the election in order to identify measures to be taken and reported to Council following the election.

2. OBJECTIVES

This plan is intended to highlight measures that the Town will be implementing to ensure equal opportunity for all electors and candidates. These objectives include:

- That all polling locations are accessible
- That persons with disabilities are able to independently cast their vote and verify their selection
- That persons with disabilities have full and equal access to all information on where and when to vote and on eligible candidates
- That persons with disabilities can fully participate in the Municipal Election as an elector, candidate, or election official.
- That efforts are made to ensure that electors with disabilities are aware of the accessibility measures available via channels such as the newspaper, media launches, the Town's website and social media.

3. DEVELOPMENT OF THE PLAN

This Plan is a "living" document which will be improved and updated as best practices are identified and new opportunities for improvement arise.

In order to develop the plan below, several steps were taken in order to ensure that the statutory requirements were met and a feasible implementation plan was in place. During the development of the 2014 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan, the following steps shall be implemented:

- Review and analysis of documents, policies and other supporting materials from AMCTO, neighboring municipalities, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and other various stakeholder groups
- Establish staff training standards and practices directly related to the Election to ensure that people with disabilities are able to vote in a positive customer service environment, and ensure that all Election Officials recognize that a voter's needs shall be accommodated.
- Consultation and meetings with the 2014 Election Team and Accessibility Advisory Committee to substantiate that the Plan meets the needs of persons with disabilities
- Presentation of a draft plan and a demonstration of accessible voting equipment to the Town of Ajax Accessibility Advisory Committee (April/May 2014)
- Presentation of a draft plan to the General Government Committee (May 8, 2014 - anticipated approval by Council May 12, 2014)

4. VOTING LOCATION

A comprehensive accessibility audit of each physical polling location will be conducted. Section 12.0 of this plan will include site audit summary information sheets relative to each polling location selected for use. The following considerations are taken into account when determining which locations will be used:

4.1 Accessible Route

Proximity of the voting location to accessible public transit routes shall be considered in the selection of voting locations. The name and/or address of the voting location shall be clearly visible. An easily navigable route will be marked for entry into the polling location and into the voting area within the location. The voting area shall be identified with clear and understandable signage.

Seating areas shall be provided throughout the voting location for individuals needing a rest.

4.2 Entrance and Egress

The route to the entrance of the voting location shall be unobstructed and accessible. The route shall be wide enough to allow for an individual using a wheelchair, scooter, other assistive device, or service animal to travel safely. Doors into the voting location and voting area shall be accessible and easy to open or shall remain propped open for the duration of the polling locations hours. Routine checks of entrance and egress routes will be made throughout the voting day.

4.3 Parking

Accessible parking shall be available at all voting locations. The designated parking space(s) shall be clearly marked with the international Symbol of Accessibility and will be on firm and level ground, close to the entrance of the voting location. By-law officers will monitor and enforce parking at voting locations throughout the day.

5. VOTING METHODS

The 2014 Town of Ajax Municipal Election will be working with Intelivote Systems Inc. to provide eVoting services to eligible voters. This includes the convenience and independence of voting from anywhere via telephone, internet or in-person at a Polling Station during the October 20 – 27, 2014 Voting Period.

Everyday tools like computers, telephones and other aids can present accessible opportunities for persons with disabilities to accomplish more, while being consistent with the principles of independence, dignity, integration and equal opportunity.

The Intelivote Voting System provides voters with the capability to vote from the comfort of their own home. Voting from home facilitates the voting process for persons with disabilities who may have mobility restrictions, visual impairment, and/or have a difficult time with transportation. Additionally, persons who have assistive devices set up in their homes can now use them to assist with casting a ballot privately and independently.

By allowing persons with disabilities to vote from any location and from a selection of methods, there is an increase in the capability for the voter to vote without any assistance. This provides persons with disabilities the same independence and privacy in participating in the election as other voters. If persons with disabilities do require assistance in the voting process, trained Election Officials will be present at in-person Polling Locations offered across Town, throughout the voting period.

5.1 Telephone Voting

Eligible voters may vote using a touch-tone telephone, and the telephone number and PIN number contained in their Voter Information Letter to access an audio ballot. Communications barriers can make it difficult for people to receive or convey information. Barriers may be identified as low volume, use of language that is not clear or plain, and confusing or unorganized menu options.

The Intelivote telephone voting application provides the following:

- Service on all types of touch tone phones and wireless devices
- Clear, plain language
- Menu options that are easy to follow, advising when to select options and provision of confirmation of the voter's selections
- Standard volume is used to allow for adjustment dependent of the telephone or device being utilized

Voters may also use the TTY (Teletypewriter) service to access eVoting services. TTY users should have full confidence when using the TTY service integrated with the Intelivote Systems voting application by phone. TTY operators received training and are required by law to maintain confidentiality of the information disclosed. No record-keeping of conversations is stored.

5.2 Internet Voting

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Eligible voters may vote online, using a smart phone, tablet device or computer and any accompanying assistive devices or software, along with their PIN and qualifying information, to access the internet address provided in their Voter Instruction Letter.

The Intelivote System has been created to meet the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG-2 Level AA), so that persons with disabilities can perceive, understand, navigate and interact with the online voting system. It is compliant with the guidelines of the World Wide Web Consortium website principles, which include organization, functionality and readability of information provided, as well as alternative ways of representing information, such as with audio.

5.3 In-person Voting at Polling Stations

For those individuals without means to access voting via telephone or internet, or who require the assistance of a trained Election Official, several advance voting Polling Stations and Election Day Polling Stations will be open to provide in-person internet voting opportunities via a laptop or touch screen monitor.

Access to the Polling Station interior and voting area shall be level and slip-resistant. Any doormats or carpeting shall be level with the floor to prevent potential tripping hazards. The voting area shall be well lit and seating shall be available. Entrance corridors shall be clear of obstructions and tripping hazards and will allow sufficient space for use of a wheelchair or scooter.

A sample Polling Location sample floor plan is attached as **Appendix A**.

An accessible voting area will be available at each polling location. These areas shall be low in height and have a wide area to allow for individuals who use a wheelchair or scooter to vote independently and secretively.

Voters may attend any Polling Station location throughout the voting period, regardless of their residence within Ajax.

The Town will be operating the following advance voting place locations during the Advance Voting Period:

October 20, 21, and 22 - 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Town Hall, Council Chambers (65 Harwood Avenue South)

October 22 - 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Ajax Community Centre HMS Room (75 Centennial Drive)

October 23 - 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
McLean Community Centre Banquet Hall (95 Magill Drive)

October 25 - 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
McLean Community Centre Banquet Hall (95 Magill Drive)

October 26 - 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Ajax Community Centre HMS Room (75 Centennial Drive)

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The following polling locations will be open on Election Day, Monday October 27, 2014 from 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

North Ajax – Wards 1 & 2

- **Kinsmen Heritage Centre** (120 Roberson Drive)
- **Lincoln Alexander Public School** (95 Church Street North)
- **McLean Community Centre** (95 Magill Drive)
- **Audley Recreation Centre** (1955 Audley Road North)
- **J. Clarke Richardson** (1355 Harwood Avenue North)

South Ajax – Wards 3 & 4

- **St. Francis Centre** (78 Church Street South)
- **Ajax Community Centre** (75 Centennial Road)
- **Lakeside Public School** (4 Parkes Drive)
- **Ajax Public Library - Main Branch** (55 Harwood Avenue South)
- **Carruthers Marsh Pavilion** (55 Ashbury Drive)

A map of Election Day Polling Locations is attached as **Appendix B**.

5.4 Special Voting Provisions

Election staff shall visit sites including long-term care facilities and retirement homes, to set-up on-site voting kiosks, or bedside voting opportunities for residents.

6. VOTING ASSISTANCE

6.1 Support Person/Friend of the Voter

Pursuant to Section 4.3 of the Town of Ajax Accessible Customer Service Policy people with disabilities shall be permitted to be accompanied by a support person at any voting location. A designated support person and/or 'Friend of the Voter' will be administered an oath of secrecy/confidentiality by an Election Official prior to providing any such assistance.

6.2 Service Animals

Pursuant to Section 4.2 of the Town of Ajax Accessible Customer Service Policy individuals requiring service animals are permitted to be accompanied by a service animal at all voting locations.

6.3 Election Officials

At in-person Polling Locations, upon request, Election Officials are available to assist any voter who requires assistance in casting their online ballot. All individuals working in the capacity of an Election Official are formally appointed as such and administered an oath of secrecy prior to voting day.

7. COMMUNICATIONS

The 2014 Municipal Election Accessibility Plan will be made available at Town Hall and by way of the Town's web site www.ajax.ca and 2014 Election web site www.ajaxvotes2014.ca. Alternative formats will be made available upon request.

Information regarding the accessibility measures provided for the 2014 Municipal Election shall be included in general election advertising as well as in the 2014 Municipal Election Nomination Package.

7.1 Election Materials

The Town is required, as per the Accessible Customer Service Standard, to provide a copy of a document to a person with a disability, or the information contained in the document, in a format that takes into account the person's disability.

Alternate Formats

Alternate formats are other ways of publishing information besides regular print. Some of these formats can be used by everyone while others are designed to address the specific needs of a user.

The Town and the person with a disability may agree upon the format to be used for the document or information.

In the event the information is not generated by the Town or is supplied by a third party, the Town will make every effort to obtain the information from the third party in an alternate format and/or will attempt to assist the Elector by providing assistive equipment.

General Election Materials

Large Print – Printed material generated by the Town will be provided in a sans serif font, minimum 11 point, and can be made available in a font (print) size that is 16 to 20 points or larger.

Website – Information generated by the Town on the website in relation to the election will be compliant with WCAG 2.0 Level A, and allow for assistive software to be utilized. In addition, website font can be adjusted within the browser's functionality to aid the user in reading the information.

Video – Promotional and educational videos created for the 2014 municipal election shall incorporate audio and captioning.

7.2 Service Disruptions

From time to time and/or for unforeseen circumstances beyond the Town's control, temporary service disruptions may be experienced. In the event of a temporary accessible service disruption, Election Officials will commit to making reasonable efforts to ensure that services are reinstated as quickly as possible and that alternative services are provided where feasible.

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In these instances of service disruptions, the Town shall provide reasonable notice in the event of a planned or unexpected disruption in the facilities or services usually used by persons with disabilities.

Notice of these temporary disruptions shall be provided in a conspicuous place and manner at the respective locations and information shall also be posted on the Town website. This notice shall include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available.

Accessible services in relation to this plan include voting places, election materials and/or voting provisions for Electors with disabilities at the voting place.

In the event of disruptions to service or unforeseen circumstances that affect the accessibility of voting places during the advance vote or on Election Day, *notices of disruption* will be posted in real time:

- on the Town's website and election website
- on Facebook
- on Twitter: @ajax.ca
- at the site of the disruption
- where applicable, a media advisory will be issued

8. APPLICATION

All election officials shall receive internal training to exercise their duties, including content relative to Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act accessibility standards, the Ontario Human Rights Code and health and safety practices.

Candidates must also have regard to the needs of electors with disabilities. Campaign offices, election materials and canvassing should all be reviewed in order ensure that they are fully accessible.

The Accessibility Directorate of Ontario has released several quick reference documents to assist candidates with accessible elections considerations:

- [Count Us In: Removing Barriers to Political Participation - Quick Reference Guide to Accessible Campaign Information and Communication](#)
- [Count Us In: Removing Barriers to Political Participation - Quick Reference Guide to Accessible Constituency, Riding Association, Central Party and Campaign Offices](#)
- [Count Us In: Removing Barriers to Political Participation - Quick Reference Guide to Accessible All Candidates Meetings](#)

9. ELECTION FEEDBACK

Pursuant to Section 4.6 of the Town of Ajax Accessible Customer Service Policy any individual has the opportunity to submit feedback regarding the provision of accessible customer service. This feedback can be submitted through regular mail, email,

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telephone, facsimile, or by using the Town's Customer Feedback Form, which is available to all staff, at all service counters and via the Town's website. Feedback about the manner in which election services are provided will be addressed using the same method.

Telephone: 905-683-4550
TextNET: 1-866-460-4489
Fax: 905-683-1061
Email: election@ajax.ca
In person: Town Hall, 65 Harwood Avenue South
Mail: Elections - Town Hall, 65 Harwood Ave. S., Ajax, ON L1S 2H9
Website: www.ajaxvotes2014.ca

All feedback pertaining to election services will be forwarded to the Election Deputy Returning Officer for response. In addition, staff working at Town facilities can complete the feedback form for submission on behalf of a person with a disability. All feedback will be responded to within one business days.

10. REPORTING

Pursuant to Section 12.1 of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, within 90 days after voting day, the Town Clerk shall submit a report to Council about the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities.

11. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Further election accessibility information can be found by visiting the Town's election website www.ajaxvotes2014.ca or by contacting any one of the following individuals:

Sarah Moore, Accessibility Coordinator/Election Support

905-619-2529, ext. 3347
1-866-460-4489 (TextNET)
sarah.moore@ajax.ca

Nicole Wellsbury, Deputy Clerk/Deputy Returning Officer

905-619-2529, ext. 3342
1-866-460-4489 (TextNET)
nicole.wellsbury@ajax.ca

Martin de Rond, Town Clerk/Returning Officer

905-619-2529, ext. 3336
1-866-460-4489 (TextNET)
martin.derond@ajax.ca

Brenda Kriz, Records Manager/Election Support

905-619-2529, ext. 3343
1-866-460-4489 (TextNET)
Brenda.kriz@ajax.ca

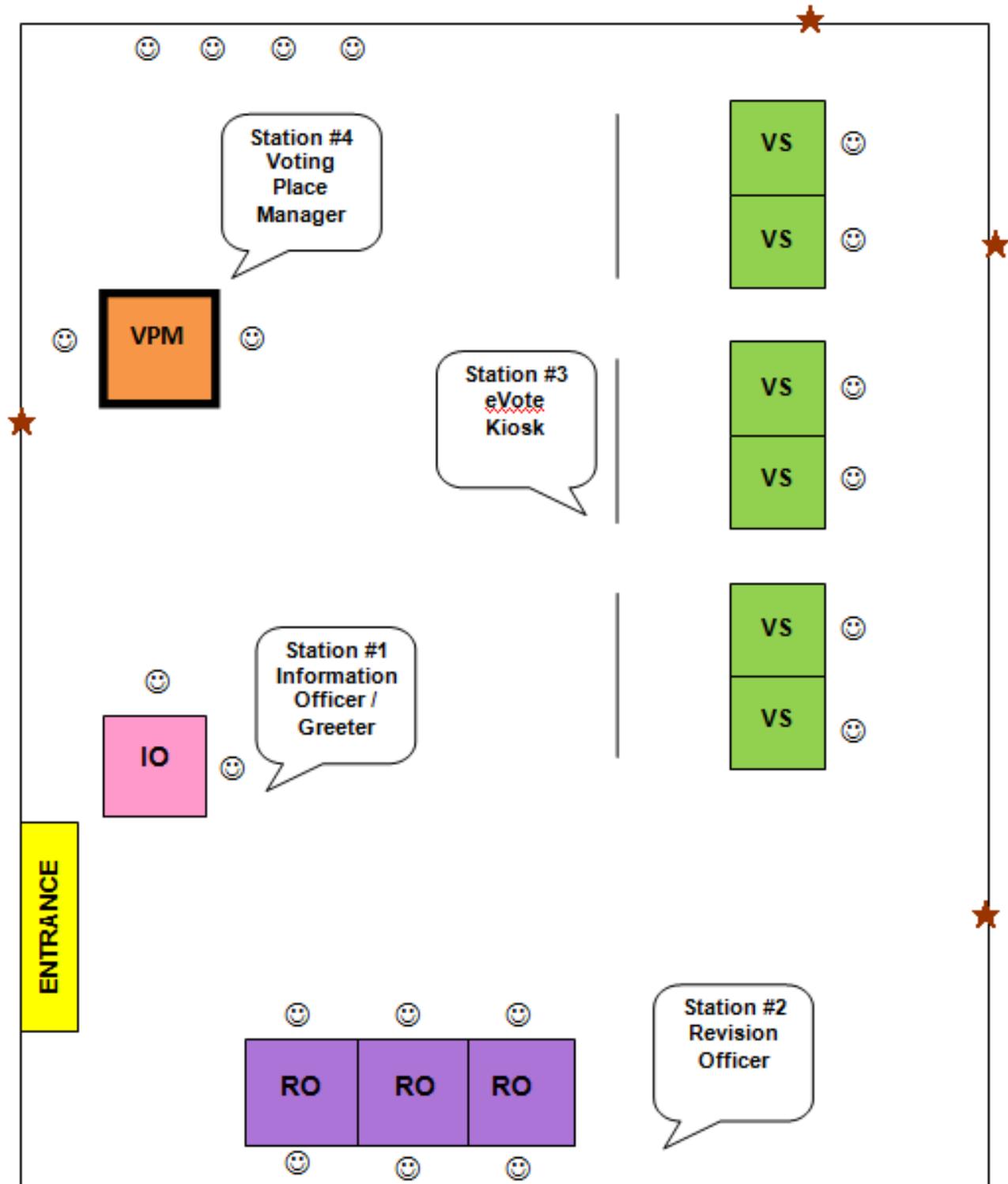
12. POLLING LOCATIONS

Site audits for all Polling Locations to be used in the 2014 Municipal Election shall be conducted by the 2014 Election Team. The purpose of the audits shall be to ensure that voting locations are conducive to the needs of election officials and voters. Site audit summary information sheets relative to each polling location will be attached to this planning document as **Appendix C**.

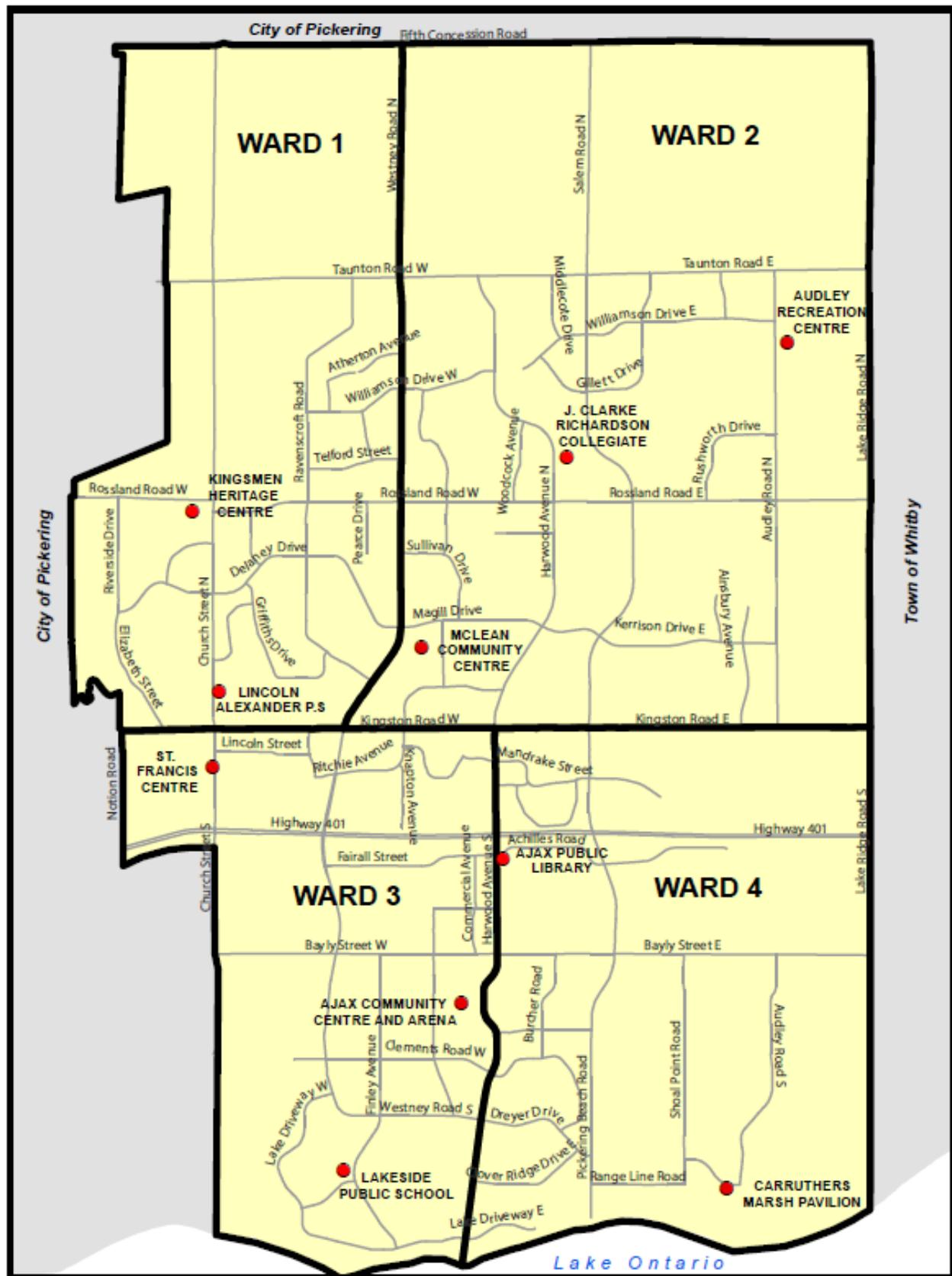
APPENDIX A – Polling Location Sample Floor Plan



Diagram not to scale – appropriate access widths shall be provided.



APPENDIX B – Election Day Polling Location Map



APPENDIX C – Site Audit Information Summary Sheets

[Placeholder]