

ACCESSIBLE AJAX



Accessibility Plan

2020 Status Report
(Appendix C to 2018-2022 Plan Document)



Alternative formats of this document are available upon request.
Please call 905-683-4550 or email contactus@ajax.ca.



Contents

★ Policy & Procedure Highlights from 2020	4
+ Customer Service Highlights from 2020	6
▲ Information & Communication Highlights from 2020	10
● Employment Highlights from 2020	12
◆ Transportation Highlights from 2020	14
♥ Public Spaces Highlights from 2020	15
♣ Feedback	16

★ Policy & Procedure

Identification of accessibility barriers and implementation of solutions to prevent and remove them throughout the organization.

★ Supported through:

- Staff and volunteer training on new and existing accessibility policies, processes and legislation.
- Ongoing policy, programming and legislation reviews, using a diversity and inclusion lens, to identify, remove and prevent barriers.
- Development of new and review of existing policies and processes relating to accessibility and accommodation.
- Incorporating new and existing tools and resources into daily business practices.

★ Highlights from 2020

Ajax Public Library

- **Staff training opportunities**
 - 72 staff completed AODA training
 - Newly-hired staff completed training on the functionalities and features of the accessibility station
- **Submission of 2020 Provincial Accessibility Compliance Report**
 - Demonstrated Ajax Public Library meets all current AODA requirements

Legislative & Information Services

- **Ongoing delivery of Integrated Accessibility Standard & Ontario Human Rights Code Training to new staff and volunteers**
 - Content continues to be delivered through an accessible, interactive online module.

Office of the CAO

- **Covid-19 Pandemic Response**
 - Incorporation of accessibility considerations throughout pandemic response (i.e. facility signage, height of sanitization stations, workplace retrofits, face covering policy, staff/visitor screening process and procedures, etc.)
- **Diversity and Inclusion**
 - Reintroduction of staff Diversity and Inclusion Steering Committee
 - Council directed an Anti-Racism and Diversity and Training Program which will include accessibility as one of the content focus areas (implementation 2021 and beyond).

Planning & Development

- **Zoning by-law review (Zoning Our Future)**
 - Staff have been preparing technical reports and a draft zoning by-law amendment that will incorporate provisions of the AODA that can be implemented via zoning (e.g.; parking standards).

Recreation, Culture & Community Development

- **Age-Friendly Ajax Community Plan (Policy & Procedure)**

- On June 8, 2020, Ajax Council unanimously endorsed and approved the Age-Friendly Ajax Community Plan.
- The Vision Statement for the Plan reads: Ajax is a vibrant, innovative and connected community, where all residents feel engaged, included, and respected, empowering all individuals to age well, live with purpose, and have opportunities to achieve their full potential.
- The Plan identifies 20 Goals and 82 Actions/Deliverables that have been organized and delineated under the World Health Organization's key elements of an age-friendly community – Outdoor Spaces & Buildings; Transportation; Housing; Social Participation, Respect & Inclusion; Civic Participation & Employment; Community Support & Health Services; Communication & Information
- Over 35 of the 82 Actions/Deliverables speak directly to physical accessibility. Other Actions/Deliverables speak to financial accessibility, accessibility of programs, resources and supports, as well as inclusion in general.
- The Age-Friendly Steering Committee, which is tasked with delivering on the Actions/Deliverables, is made up of representatives from the community as well as departmental representatives from various departments throughout the corporation. The staff representation will ensure that this Plan is used as a guiding document for Town policies, procedures and deliverables, moving forward.

+ Customer Service

Provision of accessible, quality customer service in response to the diverse needs of the Town of Ajax.

+ Supported through:

1. Provision of diverse programs and services, meeting the needs of persons with disabilities.
2. Ongoing outreach and consultation with persons with disabilities, the community and Accessibility Advisory Committee.
3. Availability of accessible feedback methods.
4. Widely available accessibility-related information.

+ Highlights from 2020

Ajax Public Library

- **Continue to investigate a sustainable library by engaging in leadership and advocacy for the essential role of the public library in the community**
 - Partnered with CNIB to launch 'Eyes Forward' Ajax vision-loss support group.
 - Presented at local school parent-teacher night events to promote the library's accessible services and resources.
- **Develop services and programs for people with various abilities**
 - Development of Curbside and Pedestrian pick-up services (Covid-related, but may continue post-Covid) which was delivered 8,011 times
 - Creation and deployment of Warming Centre to serve Ajax's vulnerable/shelterless populations for 10 days (January to March 2021)
 - Creation and deployment of online Programming services
 - Transition of annual TD Summer Reading Club to all digital/remote platform (Covid-related, but may continue post-Covid)
 - Development and expansion of eCards to allow online circulation of digital library materials
 - Programs held prior to the pandemic: Eyes Forward and Community Living workshops with a total of 102 attended over the two months period pre-pandemic.
 - Online programs held since pandemic: virtual movie screening (Keep the Change) in recognition of International Day of Persons with Disabilities and discussion to promote inclusion and accessibility in our community, and the 4th annual Mental Health Forum (53 attendees).
 - Staff continued to engage Ajax's diverse communities to enhance the quality of life of older adults and to support lifelong learning. Library continued to offer the following programs with a total of 1,651 senior attended: Westney Garden Book Club, Friendly Card Games, One-on-one and group technology virtual training, Boomers and Beyond: Armchair Travel, Headline Hunters, Genealogy group meetings, Senior Socials: Spanish, Chinese and Tamil, Senior Centre without Walls (SCWW) over Zoom for seniors to use either online or phone dial in
 - Visiting Library Service (VLS): staff call homebound seniors weekly (average 12 calls/week).

Legislative & Information Services

- **Customer Service Accommodations – pandemic response**
 - With Town Hall facility doors closed to the public since March 2020, the following actions have been undertaken to accommodate customers:

- Continued offering to serve individuals who have mobility challenges at their car (e.g. completing commissioner of oaths services for Life certificates and vehicle transfers, taking parking ticket payments)
 - Placed chairs between the vestibule for visitors who may not be able to stand for long periods of time while they speak to the customer service staff member at the door
 - Performed virtual Commissioner of Oaths services using the Province's new Regulation 431/20 under the *Commissioners for Taking Affidavits Act*
 - Implemented an online appointment booking system for Town Hall services
 - Ticket Review/First attendance process in Bylaw Services now available by telephone rather than in-person.
- **Awarding Accessibility in the Community**
 - Members of the Accessibility Advisory Committee participated in nominating local businesses and organizations for recognition by the Region and Ajax Community Awards for accessibility achievements.

Planning and Development

- **Planning & Development Application Processes**
 - Site Plan Approval application form was revised to be fillable and Adobe Reader compatible and has been uploaded to the website.
 - All building permit application submissions and review changed entirely to an electronic format utilizing email and newly acquired plan review software. People are now able to apply for, and obtain building permits without having to attend Town hall in-person.

Recreation, Culture & Community Development

- **Inclusion Services**
 - COVID-19 safety restrictions caused a change in the types and formats of services offered by the Town of Ajax. In-person summer camps were shifted into virtual offerings and curbside takeaway camp kits were created. To ensure that the kits were adaptable, customers were given the option to replace traditional art supplies with adapted equipment. The equipment that was available, free of cost was: pencil grips, easy squeeze scissors, bulb-handled paintbrushes, and large grip crayons.
 - An application was submitted to the Enabling Accessibility Fund – Youth Innovation Community Accessibility Stream for a portable multisensory cart. The Town of Ajax worked with a Youth Accessibility Leader to identify a community need, create and submit an application. Results will be available in 2021.
 - It was understood that some customers may have anxiety or difficulty transitioning back into familiar spaces with a new set of expectations and rules. Inclusion Services worked with the Graphic Designer to create a template for Social Stories. The goal of the Social Stories is to create a customizable behaviour tool template that can be posted on the Town of Ajax Inclusion Services webpage with social stories prepped for common spaces (preschool room, camp, gym, etc.). The customer will be able to insert their or their child's name into the social story and review it prior to entering the building. Template completed at the end of 2020.
- **Older Adult Programming (55+)**
 - With the closure of our buildings and in person programming a variety of virtual and curbside services have been made available to continue to service the needs of our older adult population.
 - Senior Centres Without Walls (SCWW) is a barrier free computer (zoom) and phone based program (free to participate) allowing participants to participate and take part in a variety of topics and programs (fitness, storytelling, trivia, guest speakers – health & wellness, financial support, musical and more)
 - Craft Crate is a curbside pick-up/take away program allowing participants to sign up monthly for an art kit with supplies and instructions provided. This free kit ranges from visual arts, puzzles,

flower planting, candle making and more.

- **Community Events Pivoting**

- Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic and the gathering restrictions and public protocols set out by the provincial government, all in-person events were cancelled in 2020 and the first half of 2021 (as of the time of this report).
- As a way to still engage the community and provide family friendly, arts & cultural experiences that were safe, staff were able to pivot event delivery to either a drive-in/drive-thru event or a virtual event, depending on the type of event that was being pivoted and the provincial restrictions at the time.
- 2020 events that were pivoted include the following:
 - Ajax Canada Day Spirit Kit Drive-thru Giveaway; a drive-through event that provided residents with a kit containing a number of items, activities and craft supplies, to help them celebrate Canada Day at home.
 - Ajax Canada Day Celebrations became Canada Day: The Durham Way; a virtual event delivered by all Durham Region municipalities, presented on the Town's Facebook and YouTube channels as well as on the local Rogers television channel.
 - Summer in the Square (Music in the Square & Kids in the Square) became Summer @ Home; virtual concerts and kids performances, presented on the Town's Facebook and YouTube channels.
 - Movies in the Park became Scene It Cinema; drive-in movie screenings at the Audley Recreation Centre parking lot.
 - Ajax Spirit Walk was presented virtually online with an interactive map which provided video clips of actors in period dress providing historical accounts of the time as well as commentator background information and historical photographs.
 - St. Francis Centre Season Launch was presented as a virtual show on the Town's Facebook and YouTube channels, presenting performances by the upcoming season's entertainers.
 - Pumpkinville became the Pumpkinville Halloween Kit & Pumpkin Giveaway drive-thru event; a drive-thru giveaway that also included spooky scenes and busker-type performers as entertainment while people waited in line for their Halloween themed kit and pumpkin.
 - Ajax Santa Claus Parade became Cookies & Cocoa with Santa; a virtual event hosted by Santa, featuring musical and cirque-type entertainment, Mad Science, etc. The show was presented on the Town's Facebook and YouTube channels as well as on the local Rogers television channel.
 - Staff also developed the TOA Merry & Bright: At Home for the Holidays Campaign, which featured a community light tour. Residents were able to identify holiday light displays at their home or in their neighbourhood, which allowed residents to create their own personalized holiday light tour. This could be done safely from their own vehicle.
 - Ajax Family New Year's Eve Party was changed to the Town providing online games, crafts, recipes, trivia, etc. that anyone could access from their computer

- **Festivals and Events Frequently Asked Questions**

- Festivals & Events staff have developed fulsome FAQs for each event that is delivered through the Town of Ajax Festivals & Events program.
- These FAQs include general information such as the event date, time and location, as well as answers to questions such as what type of entertainment will be featured, is there a rain date, are pets allowed, is there a private area for breast feeding, etc.
- The FAQs are provided to all Customer Service staff as a way to make information readily available for the public and to make information more accessible to potential event participants.
- Festivals & Events staff have received extremely positive feedback from Customer Service staff as the information allows them to provide immediate customer service to the public re: the event in question, without having to transfer the public to Festivals & Events staff, who may or may not be available to answer their questions

- **Form updates**

- Rebuilding Facility Set-up Sheets to be AODA compliant. Improved printed hard copy form layout, use of font, size, whitespace, etc. Public forms include the notice: *Alternative formats are available upon request by contacting: contactus@ajax.ca or 905-683-4550.* Forms will also transfer to online format.
- Staff are steadily increasing the use of the Town's online forms software (Form Builder) through eSolutions to ensure web and AODA compliance

▲ Information & Communication

Provision of Town of Ajax information and communications in accessible and alternative formats.

▲ Supported through:

1. Accessible intranet, internet sites, and applications.
2. Growing staff knowledge and training on assistive technology.
3. Awareness of alternative communications methods (TextNET, language line, etc.).
4. Availability of communications materials in accessible and alternative formats on request.

▲ Highlights from 2020

Ajax Public Library

- **Review the accessible features on all online resources, i.e. databases, download and streaming**
 - Adoption of WCAG-compliant library catalogue (ASPEN)
 - Expansion of online/digital database offering with 5 new resources and 1 existing resource that added remote (from home) access
 - Confirmed WCAG compliance with all digital database providers

Fire & Emergency Services

- **Fire Prevention Education**
 - Update fire safety materials in order to enhance communications to our diverse residents. Information cards were created in 11 languages that identify leading causes of fires in Ajax and action items that residents can take for their protection within their residences. These will be provided to the public during our different community outreach initiatives. Available languages include Arabic, Dutch, Farsi, French, German, Italian, Polish, Spanish, Tagalog, Urdu, English (current).
 - In light of COVID-19 Fire Services is transitioning its robust community outreach programs to a format that includes a virtual delivery component (current).

Legislative & Information Services

- **Innovation & Technology advancements**
 - Enabled town staff to use ZOOM electronic meeting platform for online video conferencing
 - Pilot program for digital signatures introduced for HR Services, to support virtual document signing
 - Otter.ai software enabled to support captioning and transcription of corporate communications
- **Online Live-streamed Meetings of Council and Committees**
 - In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Town rapidly moved to hold all of its Council and committee meetings online using livestreaming software. Doing so ensured that residents could watch and participate in council and committee meetings from their own homes, removing barriers that previously existed when meetings were only accessible by attending in person. Members of the Town's advisory committees and boards have been able to participate electronically as well. The Town expects to continue electronic meeting participation and livestreaming after the pandemic.

- **National AccessABILITY Week recognition**
 - Coordination of online social media campaign throughout the week to highlight accessibility and the pandemic. Members of the Accessibility Advisory Committee crafted messaging and participated in photography.
- **Accessibility awareness initiatives**
 - Community partnership with the Brain Injury Association of Durham Region to host “Unmasking Brain Injury” art exhibit of 40 masks created by people with brain injury. Exhibit is currently on display at Town Hall and will continue into 2022 when facilities re-open.
 - Recognition of Bell Let’s Talk Day with in-person photo booth and staff information station with resources and giveaway materials relating to mental wellness.
 - Coordination of Guide Dog Awareness Month activities, including a community colouring contest, local business outreach for display of Guide Dogs Welcome decals and social media messaging regarding Guide Dog Etiquette and differences between service animals, emotional support animals and guide dogs.

Office of the CAO

- **Corporate Communications Improvements**
 - Standardization of the requirement for captioning of all Town-produced videos for web and social media (100+ produced in 2020), including Recreation, Culture and Community Development content.
 - Utilization of automated captioning for Live-streamed events.
- **Website accessibility**
 - Continue to monitor web accessibility and endeavour to ensure ajax.ca and online communications channels meet AODA requirements.

Recreation, Culture & Community Development

- **Age-Friendly Community Resource Guide Development**
 - As a deliverable of the Age-Friendly Ajax Community Plan, in 2021, staff are converting the current Community Resource Guide, which is an out of date and static document, to a more comprehensive and searchable Community Resource Guide.
 - The updated and revised Community Resource Guide will be integral in providing information and resources for residents, as well as for customer service staff serving the public.
 - The Community Resource Guide content has been vetted by the Age-Friendly Ajax Steering Committee which is comprised of staff as well as representatives from senior serving organizations and seniors from the community.

● Employment

Full participation of persons with disabilities in Town of Ajax employment.

● Supported through:

1. Provision of individual employee accommodation plans and emergency situation support for employees with disabilities.
2. Accessible human resources considerations (e.g. throughout recruitment practices, interview process, employee growth and development, redeployment, etc.).
3. Ontario Human Rights Code training and resources for staff and volunteers.

● Highlights from 2020

Office of the CAO

- **Human Resources – Recruitment and Employment Accessibility Considerations**
 - **Job postings:** are posted based on AODA requirements in Taleo (online software). Postings specifically outline the following to applicants:
 - *The Town of Ajax is an equal opportunity employer, committed to diversity and accessibility within the workplace where all employees feel valued, respected and supported. The Town embraces diversity and gender expression through policy, staff training and providing positive spaces. The Town encourages applications from all qualified candidates. If selected for an interview, please inform Human Resources of any accommodation you may require during the process.*
 - Applicants are able to contact HR if they require any accommodation during the process, including assistance with submission of an online application.
 - **Interviews/Assessments:** Applicants are encouraged to make needs known to HR if an applicant requires an accommodation through the recruitment process (examples – sign language interpreter, candidate with Asperger’s had a worker attend the interview with them, candidate with a learning disability had modifications on testing). HR Services provides questions to applicants to read along when going through the interview process.
 - Many interviews conducted via Zoom and teleconference as of early 2020.
 - **Offer letter:** includes notation to make needs known to HR if they require an accommodation:
 - *The Town is committed to an inclusive and barrier-free work environment. This offer is conditional upon you being able to perform the essential duties of the job. Employment accommodations shall be assessed and managed on an individual case-by-case basis for people with disabilities who make their needs known to the Town. Information received relating to accommodation measures will be addressed confidentially.*

Recreation, Culture & Community Development

- **Inclusion Training**
 - Prior to Covid-19 restrictions, the Town of Ajax aimed to certify all Inclusion Support Staff, Inclusion Advocates and Directors, Camp and Playgrounds Specialists, Supervisors, and Directors in a free Behaviour Management Systems Training. March Break Inclusion Support Staff were successfully certified prior to closures.
- **Staff accommodations**

- Liaised with Canadian Hearing Society employment consultant regarding staff accommodations and provide ASL interpreter for staff meetings, where required.

Transportation

Contribute to accessible Regional transit planning and ensure municipal taxicab licensing meets the needs of persons with disabilities

Supported through:

1. Ongoing public discussion and consultation relative to the proportion of accessible municipal taxi cabs.
2. Continued liaising with the Region of Durham and Durham Region Transit relative to transit bus stops and shelters to be installed in the Town of Ajax.

Highlights from 2020

Legislative & Information Services

- **Private Transportation Reform and Traffic By-law update (By-law Services)**
 - A review to modernize the private transportation industry by-law to include taxis, Uber, Lyft, etc. was initiated. Public consultation to continue in 2021.
- **Accessibility Advisory Committee Public Transportation Consultation**
 - Members of the Committee participated in consultation with Metrolinx re: Durham-Scarborough Bus Rapid Transit project. The Committee provided feedback to Durham Region Transit on accessibility needs and challenges, as well as service level changes due to the pandemic

Planning & Development Services

- **Integrated Transportation Master Plan (ITMP)**
 - Throughout implementation of the Integrated Transportation Master Plan, staff continue development and enhancement of the Town's multi-modal transportation network through accessibility lens.

♥ Public Spaces

Greater accessibility into, within, out of, and around Town of Ajax facilities, parks, trails and public spaces.

♥ Supported through:

1. New facility construction and future renovations and retrofits in compliance with the Design of Public Spaces Standards.
2. Consideration for accessibility improvements during maintenance and repairs to facilities, trails, parks and public spaces.

♥ Highlights from 2020

Legislative & Information Services *(in partnership with Operations and Recreation, Culture and Community Development)*

- **Enabling Accessibility Fund (EAF) application**

- The Town partnered with an EAF local youth ambassador to submit a grant application for the Enabling Accessibility Fund that could provide funding to install automated door operators at the Ajax Community Centre north ice pads accessible washroom.

Office of the C.A.O.

- **Grants, Partnerships and Strategic Initiatives**

- Thirteen Capital Grant Applications submitted to the Government of Canada including accessibility as the key priority

Operations & Environmental Services

- **Parks and Playgrounds**

- Denis O'Connor Park: Retrofit of an existing park inclusive of new playground equipment, accessible playground surfacing, lighting, walkways, furniture, and tree planting.
- Mulberry Meadows Parkettes (x3): New parkettes constructed inclusive of new playground, accessible playground surfacing, lighting, walkways, seating areas, furniture, and tree planting.

- **Capital Projects**

- Paradise Park Washroom: New washroom facility within existing park. Project currently under construction. Scope includes a two room pre-fabricated "smart" (self-cleaning) washroom facility inclusive of walkways, furniture, and tree planting.
- Rotary Park Boardwalk: New accessible boardwalk structure at existing boardwalk over the mouth of the Duffin's Creek. Project currently under construction. Scope includes new metal and wood boardwalk, walkways, tree planting.

Planning and Development

- **Development Application Review**

- Staff review all development applications to ensure compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. For example, staff are reviewing and commenting on an active development application for 310 Kingston Rd that proposes approximately 50% of the 349 residential units to be accessible.

♣ Feedback

The Town of Ajax encourages comments on the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and suggestions for accessibility improvements. What does accessibility mean to you? There are a number of ways that you can connect with the Town to share your accessibility-related comments:

Staff Lead: Sarah Moore
Committee & Accessibility Coordinator

Email: accessibility@ajax.ca

Phone: 905-619-2529 ext. 3347

NEXTalk: 1-866-460-4489

Fax: 905-683-1061

Mail: Accessible Ajax
65 Harwood Avenue South
Ajax, Ontario
L1S 2H9

Hardcopy Customer Feedback Forms are also available at all Town of Ajax facilities.



ACCESSIBLE
AJAX    

