

Committee of the Whole (2) Report

DATE: Tuesday, September 19, 2023

WARD(S): ALL

TITLE: **SUPPORTING INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES: ACCELERATING ACCESSIBILITY COALITION**

FROM:

Nick Spensieri, City Manager

ACTION: DECISION

Purpose

This report seeks Council approval for the City of Vaughan to join the Accelerating Accessibility Coalition (AAC). Joining the AAC will support Vaughan's commitment to empower People with Disabilities and its aging population, and further position the City as a thought leader to advance purpose-driven economic development for the City's well-established construction and development industries.

Report Highlights

- The Accelerating Accessibility Coalition (AAC), launched in 2022, is a first-of-its-kind community of real estate development and accessibility leaders focused on accelerating the supply of new accessible buildings and homes in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area to build fully inclusive communities.
- Accessibility is an important aspect of inclusive communities.
- The City of Vaughan would be the first municipality to join the Coalition, further establishing the City as a champion for accessibility and enhancing its commitment to support and empower its large and growing communities of People with Disabilities and aging population.
- Activities undertaken through the Coalition will be tracked and reported through the new Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.
- There is no financial impact associated with AAC membership.

Recommendations

1. THAT Council authorize the Mayor, or designate, to provide a written statement of support on the importance of increasing accessibility in housing on behalf of the City of Vaughan;
2. THAT Council authorize the City's membership in the Accelerating Accessibility Coalition and delegate authority to the City Manager, or designate, to execute any agreements related to membership;
3. THAT any activities undertaken through the Coalition be tracked and reported through the new Multi-Year Accessibility Plan; and
4. THAT the Office of Communications and Economic Development promotes the Coalition, the City's membership, and the importance of improving accessibility in housing supply through its channels, where appropriate.

Background

The Accelerating Accessibility Coalition is a first-of-its-kind community of accessibility and real estate development leaders that support accelerating the supply of accessible buildings and homes in the Greater Toronto Hamilton Area (GTHA) to build fully inclusive communities.

The Accelerating Accessibility Coalition (the Coalition) was launched in partnership with Urban Land Institute (ULI) Toronto and Access Now (an accessibility technology company) in 2022, dedicated to changing the face of accessibility in real estate. It is a first-of-its-kind community of real estate development and accessibility leaders.

The Coalition is underpinned by the belief that accessible housing benefits everyone and that a sign of a fully inclusive and prosperous country is for people of all ages and abilities to be able to participate fully in society without barriers, including having access to homes that are barrier-free.

The first phase of the coalition is about increasing awareness and understanding of why and how to build housing that is accessible at little to no additional cost.

ULI Toronto serves as the secretariat for the coalition. This coalition is made up of real estate development and accessibility leaders who are focused on supporting and accelerating the supply of new accessible buildings and homes in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA). There are more than 30 members since launching late last year, including EllisDon, Daniels, and Cadillac Fairview.

During follow-up on opportunities to support Vaughan's real estate, development, and construction industries, the City was invited to join the AAC.

Earlier this year, Economic Development attended the LandPRO Conference, an annual conference that draws more than 1,000 in-person and virtual attendees consisting of professionals across all areas of real estate and land development. One of the conference sessions centered on accessibility in the built form and highlighted the Accelerating Accessibility Coalition (AAC) as an opportunity for industry to further engage and advance inclusivity in communities. As part of the follow-up on opportunities from the conference, Economic Development has been in correspondence with the Coalition and received an invitation for the City to join as a member.

Previous Reports/Authority

[Annual Accessibility Status Report, 2022.](#)

[Updated Accessibility Policy, Committee of the Whole \(2\), Tuesday, June 21, 2022.](#)

[Age-friendly Community Action Plan & Implementation Strategy, Committee of the Whole \(Working Session\), Wednesday, April 6, 2022.](#)

[City of Vaughan's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan and Multi-Year Action Plan, Committee of the Whole \(1\) Report, Tuesday, April 5, 2022.](#)

[2019-2022 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan Update, Committee of the Whole \(2\), Tuesday, February 9, 2021.](#)

Analysis and Options

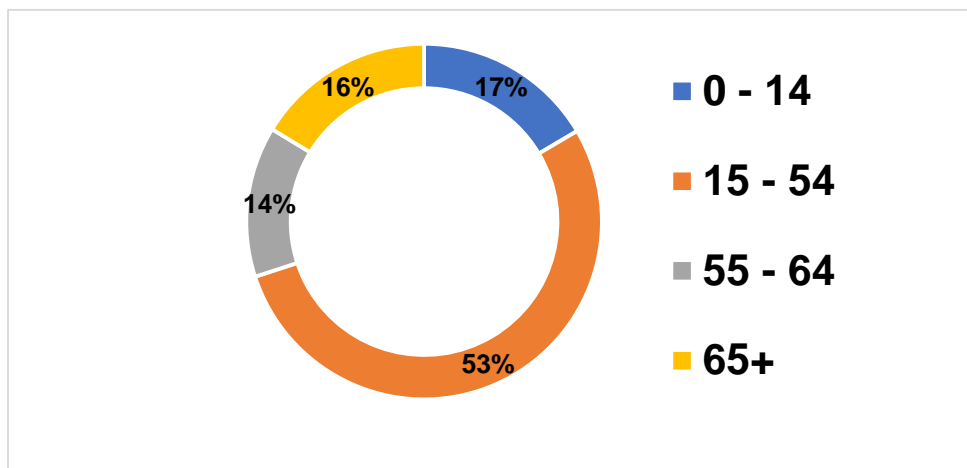
Vaughan would be the first municipality to join as a member of the Coalition – further positioning the City as a champion for accessibility and ties in with the City's commitment to support and empower its large and growing communities of People with Disabilities and aging population.

Vaughan has been invited to join the AAC as a member of the coalition, and would be the first municipality in the GTHA to do so. This is in line with the City's positioning to support and empower its large and growing communities of People with Disabilities and aging population. Membership in the Coalition is aligned with Vaughan's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan, the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, and the Age-Friendly Community Action Plan.

Accessibility is an important aspect of fully inclusive communities, which requires built form to meet residents' needs for daily living across all life stages. The ability to age in place in the community will become an increasingly important issue as populations continue to age.

Achieving complete and viable communities requires that communities be designed to meet people's needs for daily living throughout a lifetime. The ability to age in place or in the community will become an issue as populations age, given most new and existing homes do not meet the needs of Canadians who require accessibility accommodations. In Vaughan, 16 per cent of the population is aged 65 years or older (see Figure 1). An additional 44,310 residents will be turning 65 or older in the next 10 years.¹

Figure 1: Vaughan's population distribution by age cohort, 2021.



One in five (22 per cent) of Canadians aged 15 years and over identified as having at least one disability, with more than half identifying as having a physical disability. Of those with a physical disability, nearly half required at least one type of aid or assistive device or accessibility feature in their home.²

On the heels of the province's goal of 1.5 million new homes by 2031 to accommodate shortfalls and population growth, identifying and removing barriers for people with disabilities extends to ensuring the available housing supply in both urban and suburban settings incorporates physical accessibility into built-form.

¹ Vaughan Census Profile. Statistics Canada. 2021 Census of Population.

² Measuring Disability in Canada. Statistics Canada. December 2, 2022.

Vaughan is committed to an inclusive and diverse culture where everyone is treated with dignity and respect.

The City currently has three relevant advisory committees which advance the City's commitment to inclusivity:

- Anti-Hate, Diversity and Inclusion
- Age-Friendly Vaughan
- Accessibility

Becoming a member of the Coalition reinforces the City as a thought leader that advances purpose-driven economic development for the City's well-established construction and development industries.

Vaughan's construction and building materials sectors are integral to residential, commercial, and industrial building across Ontario and Canada – contributing over \$4.1 billion in real GDP to Vaughan's economy and employing more than 35,800 workers in 2022.

Vaughan continues to be a city on the rise and development shows no indicators of slowing down. In 2022, all permits issued from the City totaled \$1.7 billion in building construction value. Unprecedented growth shows no signs of slowing in 2023, as residential construction sets records this year. The total value of residential permits has surpassed previous records despite only being halfway through the year – at the end of the second quarter of 2023, residential permits were in excess of \$1.1 billion in construction value.

The City does not currently require any quota for accessible units or features beyond the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA) requirements.

The operational impact of joining the AAC on the City is minimal and there are no budgetary implications to joining the Coalition.

Membership requires the submission of a Statement of Support outlining why accessible housing is important to the signatory and the City of Vaughan.

As a member of the coalition, actions undertaken by the City could include:

- Promotion of membership and coalition via the City's social media and communications channels.
- The City may organize or support education sessions with the coalition and Vaughan's real estate and construction industries.

- Contributing to the Accessibility Toolbox if there is any research, case studies or helpful templates that developers and/or builders can benefit from in efforts to increase accessibility in built form.

In the future, members of the Coalition may be asked to make a more tangible public commitment to designing accessibility into projects.

Financial Impact

None.

Operational Impact

This opportunity and operational impacts were assessed and discussed in consultation with internal stakeholder departments, including but not limited to:

- Economic Development
- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer)
- Policy Planning
- Corporate and Strategic Communications

Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations

Vaughan's construction and development industries contribute significantly to all types of construction across the Greater Toronto Hamilton Area (GTHA). As a champion for accessibility and member, Vaughan can further amplify and advance efforts to create inclusive communities by the Coalition by increasing accessibility in built form.

Conclusion

Creating inclusive, accessible, and complete communities ensures that people of all ages and abilities can participate fully in society and increases prosperity for all. Joining the Accelerating Accessibility Coalition builds on Vaughan's existing commitment to an inclusive and diverse culture.

Upon approval of this report, staff will work with the Mayor, or designate, to prepare a Statement of Support in order to become a member of the Accelerating Accessibility Coalition.

For more information, please contact: Raphael Costa, Director, Economic Development, ext. 8891 or Michael Genova, Chief, Communications and Economic Development, ext. 8027.

Attachments

None.

Prepared by

Lindsay Davidson, Acting Manager, Economic Development, ext. 8892.

Approved by

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nick Spensieri', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Nick Spensieri, City Manager