


2023-2027

Multi-Year Accessibility Plan



We respectfully acknowledge that the City of Vaughan is situated in the Territory and Treaty 13 lands of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. We also recognize the traditional territories of the Huron-Wendat and the Haudenosaunee. The City of Vaughan is home to many First Nations, Métis and Inuit people today. As representatives of the people of the City of Vaughan, we are grateful to have the opportunity to work and live in this territory.

Table of Contents

- Message from Mayor Steven Del Duca 4
- Message from Accessibility Advisory Committee Chair, Councillor Gila Martow 5
- Message from City Manager Nick Spensieri 6
- Commitment to an Accessible Vaughan 7
 - Accessibility Advisory Committee Members 8
- Guiding Principles 9
- General Requirements 10
 - Training 11
 - Procurement 11
- Information and Communications 12
- Customer Service 13
- Employment 15
- Transportation 16
- Design of Public Spaces 18
- Excellence in Accessibility 19
- Connect, Engage and Stay Informed 21
- Appendix: Snapshot of Disability in Vaughan 22

To request an accessible format of this report contact accessibility@vaughan.ca, Service Vaughan at 905-832-2281 or by TTY at 1-866-543-0545.

MESSAGE FROM

Mayor Steven Del Duca



At the City of Vaughan, we are committed to treating everyone in a way that allows them to maintain their dignity and independence. We believe in integration and fair access for

residents, visitors and employees with visible or non-visible disabilities.

Vaughan must be barrier-free, and our goal is to become a completely accessible municipality. The City wants to ensure Vaughan is welcoming, inclusive and a place where people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds can thrive.

Planning for this goal is no small task – it's an essential part of Vaughan's future, and we are dedicated to working with our partners and residents to ensure we can achieve it. We are stronger together, and it's only together that we can accomplish our ambitious goals.

Our Multi-Year Accessibility Plan charts our path forward and will keep us on the right track.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Del Duca'.

Steven Del Duca

Mayor of Vaughan

MESSAGE FROM

Accessibility Advisory Committee Chair, Councillor Gila Martow



As the Chair of the City of Vaughan's Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC), I am honoured to play a role in the development and implementation of our City's Multi-Year

Accessibility Plan. This comprehensive strategy is designed to prepare the way for a more inclusive and accessible Vaughan, where every resident has the opportunity to actively participate in our vibrant community.

Our vision is grounded in the belief that inclusivity enhances the overall well-being of our residents and visitors and serves as a cornerstone of our diverse city. The Multi-Year Accessibility Plan encompasses a wide range of initiatives, each aimed at breaking down barriers and ensuring people of all abilities can enjoy equal access to the resources and opportunities our city offers.

The plan covers many facets of accessibility, including the creation of user-friendly public spaces, improvements in transportation services, and the development of more accessible

communication channels. It also emphasizes the importance of inclusive employment practices, support for accessible workplaces, and the provision of recreational and cultural programs that cater to the diverse needs of our community.

To bring this plan to life, we rely on the dedication and collaboration of our City staff, local businesses, and community partners. As Chair of the Vaughan AAC, I am committed to working closely with stakeholders, disability advocates and residents to ensure the Plan remains effective, adaptive and reflective of our community's diverse perspectives.

Together, let us strive to make Vaughan a shining example of accessibility and inclusivity, where every individual has the chance to contribute to our city's success and enjoy a fulfilling life.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gila Martow". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "G" and "M".

Councillor Gila Martow

Chair, Accessibility Advisory Committee

MESSAGE FROM

City Manager Nick Spensieri



The City of Vaughan is committed to creating a barrier-free community and workplace with universal access to its programs, services and facilities.

The 2023-2027 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan builds on the successes of the [2019-2022 Accessibility Plan](#) (PDF) and reinforces the City's priority to foster an active, engaged and inclusive community, as outlined in Vaughan's [2022-2026 Term of Council Service Excellence Strategic Plan](#).

This plan addresses how staff will continue to design barrier-free public spaces, enhance transportation and customer service, and use accessible communication and information channels

to meet the diverse needs of the community. It also underscores the significance of championing inclusive employment practices and accessible workplaces.

Thank you to the City staff, the Technical Advisory Committee and the Vaughan Accessibility Advisory Committee, chaired by Councillor Gila Martow, for preparing this comprehensive plan.

I look forward to making further advancements in accessibility and continuing to improve the quality of life for all.

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

Nick Spensieri
City Manager

Commitment to an Accessible Vaughan

Welcome to the City of Vaughan's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP) for the years 2023-2027. This comprehensive five-year plan aims to create an accessible and barrier-free environment for all the city's residents, visitors and businesses.

The 2023-2027 MYAP reflects our shared commitment to an inclusive and accessible city. Aligned with fostering Active, Engaged and Inclusive Communities – a strategic priority in the City's 2022-2026 Term of Council Service

Excellence Strategic Plan (Strategic Plan) – this MYAP aims to create a vibrant, diverse and equitable city for all residents, valuing the contributions of people with disabilities. Additionally, the City strives to apply the 'Social Model' of disability in accessibility planning. This model considers barriers to accessibility as issues in the environment that must be resolved. The more prevalent 'Medical Model' generally frames the individual's difference as a problem to solve.

In alignment with the principles of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)*, our vision is to make Vaughan a model city for accessibility and inclusion. The MYAP outlines various strategies, goals and initiatives that will ensure people of all abilities can enjoy equal access to opportunities, services and facilities within the City.

The MYAP is the result of extensive consultations with community members, stakeholders and accessibility experts. It is a living document, designed to be flexible and adaptive to the evolving needs of our community. The plan will be reviewed, assessed and updated regularly to ensure its continued effectiveness and relevance.



It is essential to consider the various levels of government jurisdiction and their different roles in promoting accessibility and inclusion in the context of this MYAP. The City exercises direct control over municipal services, infrastructure and programs, enabling the implementation of accessibility initiatives at the local level. As part of the Regional Municipality of York, Vaughan benefits from an area of influence that facilitates collaboration and the sharing of best practices with neighbouring municipalities. This regional co-operation allows for developing cohesive and integrated accessibility initiatives across the broader community.

Finally, the City advocates at the provincial and federal levels, pushing for progressive policies and legislation that support accessibility and inclusion for all Canadians. By actively participating in these different spheres, the City strives to advance accessibility across all levels of government, ensuring our community remains an exemplar of inclusivity and equal opportunity.

Accessibility Advisory Committee Members



Gila Martow
Ward 5 Councillor
Chair, Accessibility
Advisory Committee



Rudy
BARRELL



Noor
DIN



Nazila
ISGANDAROVA



Paresh
JAMNADAS



Nida
KHURSHID



Michael
NIGRO



Michelle
ZALDIN

Guiding Principles

This MYAP represents a collaborative effort between the City and stakeholders from all over Vaughan, as well as subject matter experts and partners across York Region and beyond.

As part of the development of this MYAP, the City actively engaged with diverse communities to gain insights into their idea of an accessible

city. Drawing from the community's valuable feedback, the City has derived five guiding principles to shape this plan and guide our actions.

The City is committed to:

Health and Safety: prioritizing the health, safety and wellness of the community and promoting equitable opportunities for all.

Clear and Accessible Information: providing clear and accessible communication to the public, ensuring everyone has the necessary information, resources and support to thrive.

Inclusion and Equity: equitable processes to foster a welcoming, flexible and inclusive environment that respects the unique needs of our diverse community.

Accessible City: an inclusive community that strives to eliminate physical, technological and attitudinal barriers for people with visible and invisible disabilities.

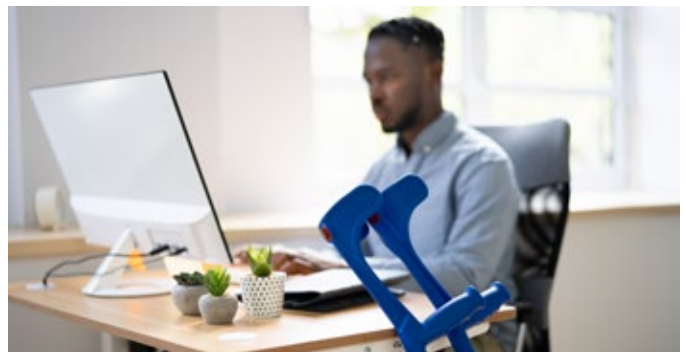
Continuous Improvement: receiving feedback and making the necessary changes to our policies, procedures and services to continuously enhance accessibility and inclusion.



General Requirements

The AODA outlines requirements organizations must follow to ensure accessibility for people with disabilities. These requirements encompass various areas, including customer service, information and communications, employment, transportation and design of public spaces. By adhering to these standards, the City aims to foster an inclusive environment that promotes equal access and participation for all individuals, regardless of their abilities.

The General Requirements contain guidelines on establishing and maintaining an accessibility plan to remove barriers for people with disabilities. This involves considering accessibility during procurement and installing of self-service kiosks. Organizations must also provide relevant training on accessibility standards and the Human Rights Code, and ensure there are accessible feedback processes.



Training

AODA training is required for all City employees, including volunteers and interns, public appointees or officials providing goods, services or facilities on behalf of the City of Vaughan.

The City is committed to:

1.1 Enhancing employee knowledge and commitment to accessible customer service, equity, inclusion and human rights.

Key activities:

- Implement an inclusive training program that incorporates an intersectional approach and covers various types of disabilities, including mental health or cognitive conditions, invisible and episodic disabilities.

Procurement

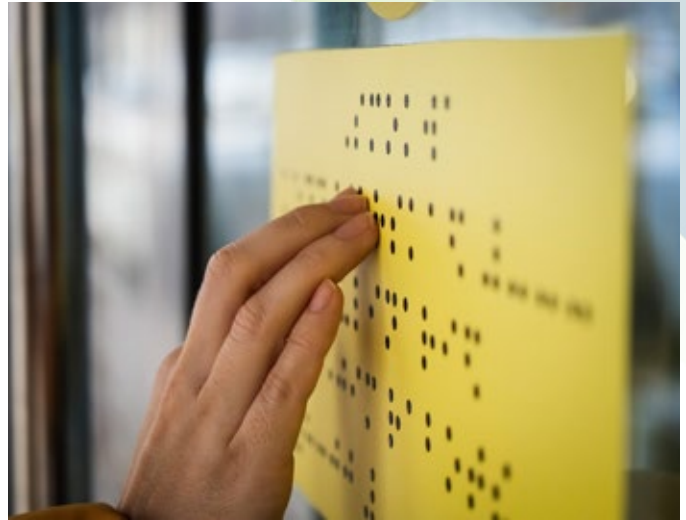
The AODA requires organizations to include accessibility criteria in procuring goods, services and facilities. This means accessibility is a component of all bids and contracts.

The City is committed to:

1.2 Integrating accessibility considerations into the procurement process, ensuring all procured products and services meet or exceed accessibility standards.

Key activities:

- Revise language in all bidding documents and contracts to incorporate explicit accessibility and training requirements exceeding the standard AODA statement.
- Ensure vendors follow applicable guidelines or standards on topics such as accessible documents, presentations, meetings, features and tools, and incorporate requirements into procurement evaluation criteria.



Information and Communications

The AODA Information and Communications Standards lays out rules for organizations when creating, providing and receiving information and communications that people with disabilities can access, to give everyone an equal chance to learn and be active in their communities. The City has initiated the Information and Communication Accessibility Project to ensure the accessibility and usability of web-based services and information for all users.

The City is committed to:

2.1 Ensuring equal access to information for all users, regardless of their abilities.

Key activities:

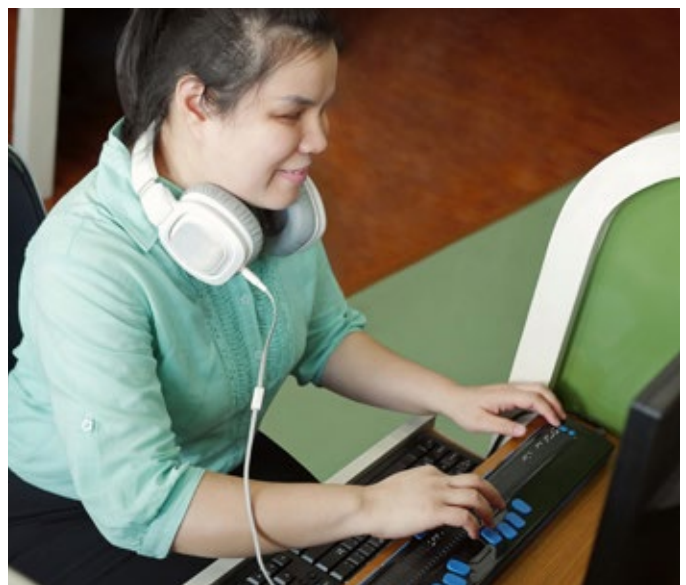
- Conduct an evaluation of accessibility compliance to identify areas of opportunity, establishing a baseline for future improvements.
- Develop recommendations and implementation plans to ensure the City meets or exceeds the AODA Information and Communications Standards.

- Build staff capacity through training focused on producing inclusive digital content across diverse platforms and formats, and promote the use of inclusive and plain language guides and best practices.

2.2 Establishing accessibility standards for all external meetings.

Key activities:

- Proactively plan and arrange for accommodations and ensure participants are provided with clear instructions on how to request any additional support.



Customer Service

The AODA Customer Service Standard outlines requirements for service providers to make their goods, services and facilities accessible for customers with disabilities. For municipalities, this means recognizing the rights, dignity and independence of people with disabilities, and working towards equal access to any of a City's services, goods or facilities for residents and visitors of all abilities. Full compliance requires the City to remove barriers that are attitudinal, systemic and physical.

The City is committed to:

3.1 Improving accessibility and inclusivity in service provision and communication for people with disabilities.

Key activities:

- Enhance accessibility of citizen and business surveys by offering accessible alternate formats on request; considering additional accessibility options for telephone surveys; and incorporating
- Update the Accessible Customer Service Policy to ensure continued relevance and effectiveness, and provide accessible customer service training that exceeds

AODA requirements and promotes inclusive language, increasing awareness of disabilities, and improved program implementation, adaptation and behaviour management.

- Develop a strategy for training and raising awareness among employees, the public, and third parties providing services on the City's behalf about the rights of people with disabilities to enter City facilities with a support animal, and the right of support persons to have free access to recreational services.
- Develop and implement inclusive services in alignment with the City's Accessible Customer Service and Accessibility Policies, while pursuing a strategy to procure and replace adaptive equipment and assistive technologies to continue making recreational programs more accessible.

The City's MYAP is driven by engagement with the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) and consultations with disability-focused organizations, as well as the public and internal partners.

The City is committed to:

3.2 Fostering an inclusive and accessible City by regularly engaging with people with disabilities.

Key activities:

- Continue public engagement activities and consultations, particularly with the City's AAC and diverse disability communities, to ensure that programming, policies and services relating to customer service for people with disabilities are informed by a diverse range of lived experiences with disability.
- Maintain feedback loops through regular consultations with the City's AAC and leverage the City's and Region's growing networks of local and regional disability communities and organizations for further insights to inform strategies with expertise and analysis drawing on lived experience.
- Launch a wayfinding and accessibility pilot in partnership with the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) to evaluate a technology solution for improving independent navigation of City facilities by people with vision-related disabilities.



Employment

The AODA Employment Standard aims to eliminate barriers and discrimination in all aspects of employment, including recruitment, selection, hiring, training, advancement and accommodations. Its goal is to create inclusive and accessible workplaces where people with disabilities have equal opportunities for employment and can fully contribute their skills and talents.

The City is committed to:

4.1 Developing an Accommodation Policy and Guide to foster an inclusive culture that prioritizes accessibility and continuous improvement in managing accommodation processes.

Key activities:

- Enhance staff awareness across all departments about available accommodation types and the process to discuss a request.
- Develop and implement a People Leader training program to ensure effective management of accommodation requests, promoting a supportive work environment that empowers staff to seek assistance as needed throughout their employment, including during role transitions.

- Promote a culture of accessibility and inclusion among staff by launching Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) to engage those with lived expertise or relevant life experience.

4.2 Fostering an inclusive workplace by provision of accessible formats and communication supports for all staff, and by expanding employment and co-op opportunities for people with disabilities.

Key activities:

- Develop comprehensive accessibility guidelines for all virtual, hybrid and in-person meetings, considering and addressing accommodation needs across the organization and ensuring guidelines are communicated and standardized.
- Leverage strategic partnerships with community agencies or local business networks and employment programs to enhance co-op and employment opportunities for people with disabilities, thereby promoting workplace accessibility, diversity, equity and inclusion.

Transportation

The Transportation Standard of the AODA aims to make it easier for everyone to travel in Ontario. Elements of the Transportation Standard apply to organizations and agencies that provide transportation services such as public transit, taxicabs and school boards, hospitals and universities who provide such services (e.g. shuttle buses). Transit-related points are covered further on in this report as they fall under York Region's jurisdiction.

Under the Transportation Standard, municipalities are mandated to promote or facilitate the availability of accessible taxicabs to ensure equal opportunities for people with disabilities. Accessible taxis and the ability to travel with greater independence support social inclusion by enabling free movement, access to community activities, economic engagement and workforce participation.

The City's overall strategy on maintaining and managing transportation infrastructure promotes best practices, as well as AODA compliance.

The City is committed to:

5.1 Advocating and promoting accessible methods of transportation to provide inclusive options for individuals with disabilities.

Key activities:

- Engage with the AAC and use public forums to gather community inputs, collaborating with people with disabilities to understand their specific needs and preferences.
- Evaluate feedback to establish the optimal proportion of on-demand accessible taxicabs needed and develop a plan to promote adequate availability of accessible taxi services for the community.
- Promote accessibility by requiring AODA compliant transportation infrastructure and accessible on-street parking, while continuing to promote active transportation.
- Create and implement standardized AODA requirements in design criteria relating to sidewalks, cycling facilities and roadways.



- Complete an asset review of traffic calming infrastructure (crossings, crosswalks, pavement markings, etc.) and develop recommendations to improve accessibility and reduce barriers or unsafe passage for young children, older adults and people with diverse disabilities.
- Develop an Intelligent Transportation Systems strategy to promote technological innovation that increases accessibility. This strategy will help plan and install equipment and technologies to support accessible and touchless traffic signals.
- Conduct a Wayfinding Signage Pilot that is part of the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre (VMC) Parks and Wayfinding Master Plan. The pilot will gather feedback from the community to evaluate the effectiveness of five new signs, helping the City better respond to the way people understand and move through Vaughan's downtown and its parks and open spaces. Building on this pilot, the City will improve guidelines on signage and wayfinding in public spaces.

Design of Public Spaces

The AODA Design of Public Spaces Standard is central for municipalities to achieve inclusion and accessibility in community infrastructure. It provides guidelines for designing and constructing public spaces, ensuring equal access for people with disabilities. Compliance with this standard enables the creation of inclusive spaces that consider the needs of all community members, promoting independence and quality of life.

The City is committed to:

6.1 Implementing a comprehensive accessibility improvement plan with regular audits and upgrades to enhance accessibility of municipal facilities and infrastructure and promoting compliance by external stakeholders.

Key activities:

- Prioritize building upgrades based on a Building Accessibility Assessment, starting with sites with highest actual and potential use by people with disabilities, showing progress each year, and

conducting an inventory of accessibility gaps, determining the level of urgency and need for upgrades, current and upcoming.

- Formalize a process to include AODA compliance in development application plan reviews for both developer build and capital projects, incorporating consultations with the AAC.

6.2 Advancing compliance and best practices in wayfinding and signage, recreational trails, facilities, parks, playgrounds and outdoor spaces as the City constructs, redevelops or upgrades.

Key activities:

- Establish new signage standards and guidelines for trails and public spaces maintained by the City and audit all signage in recreation sites to meet accessibility standards.
- Develop and implement standardized AODA-compliant design criteria for sidewalks, cycling facilities, roadways and other infrastructure.

Excellence in Accessibility

Advocacy and commitment to social change are priorities for the disability communities who have generously participated in consultations to develop this MYAP. As such, the City is committed to promoting accessibility and inclusion in areas outside of our jurisdiction where the City may have varying degrees of influence, and to promoting a broader culture of innovation and inclusion towards accessibility for all.

Accelerating Accessibility Coalition

The City joined the Accelerating Accessibility Coalition convened by the Urban Land Institute (ULI) Toronto. This new coalition aims to promote the creation of accessible housing, and Vaughan will be the first local government to join.



Accessibility Champion Awards

The City acknowledges and honours accessibility champions, in collaboration with the AAC, to highlight innovative contributions towards greater inclusion and accessibility.

Inclusive Transit

The City is committed to promoting inclusion in transportation beyond its own jurisdiction, including accessible public transit. As part of this effort, the City will collaborate with York Region and transit partners to address gaps in accessible transit across cities and regions.

Key activities to advance this aspect of the AODA's Transportation Standard that is out of the City's jurisdiction will be to:

- conduct outreach, public meetings and surveys to gather feedback on transit needs and preferences to ensure community inputs inform planning and implementation of transit solutions in alignment with the specific requirements of different neighbourhoods and demographics.

- identify areas where transit gaps exist, such as underserved neighbourhoods or routes with greater barriers to accessibility, to ensure transit planning and implementation processes prioritize equity and inclusion. Establish regular communication channels to discuss transit issues, share data and exchange ideas on closing the gaps identified. Support York Region and transit partners in the design of targeted solutions for closing transit gaps based on the analysis conducted.
- research funding sources such as government grants, public-private partnerships and community initiatives to help secure the financial resources needed for addressing transit gaps. Explore opportunities for collaboration with neighbouring municipalities and transit authorities to create a seamless and interconnected regional transit network. Co-ordinate efforts and share best practices to address transit gaps that extend beyond York Region's borders.



Connect, Engage and Stay Informed

This MYAP is the result of community, internal, regional and sectoral collaborations that rely on continuous engagement. The City will revisit this plan regularly in the years ahead and provide annual reports to the public that share updates on progress to continue to foster communication, transparency and Service Excellence.

As such, the City is grateful for questions, thoughts and constructive feedback, and hopes residents and visitors to Vaughan will reach out with any inputs.

Contact accessibility@vaughan.ca or Service Vaughan at 905-832-2281 or by TTY at 1-866-543-0545 with any feedback or inquiries, or to request an accessible format of this report.

You can also [subscribe](#) to receive information, email updates and notices of community engagement activities relating to this plan.

For more information on the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act (ODA)* and *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)*, contact:

Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility
777 Bay St., Suite 601A
Toronto, ON M7A 2J4

Telephone: 416-849-8276
Toll Free: 1-866-515-2025
TTY: 416-326-0148
TTY Toll Free: 1-800-268-7095
Fax: 416-325-9620

accessibility@ontario.ca
**Ministry for Seniors
and Accessibility webpage**



APPENDIX:

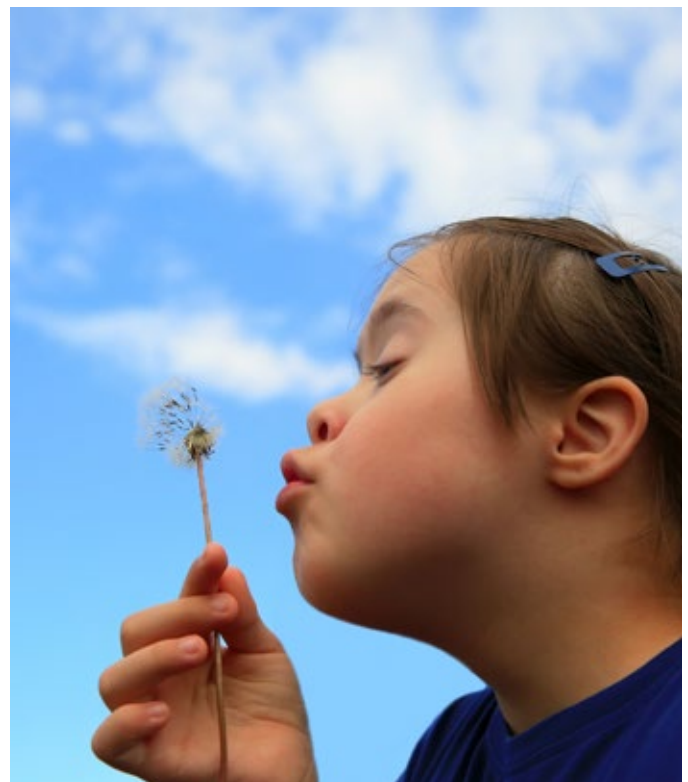
Snapshot of Disability in Vaughan

A snapshot of disability in Vaughan and York Region provides valuable insights into the diverse needs of our community members, enabling us to better tailor our accessibility initiatives to address these needs effectively.

In Vaughan, more than 20 per cent of the population has reported living with some form of disability, which includes mobility, vision, hearing, cognitive and other conditions. The prevalence of disabilities in any community increases with age, with seniors accounting for a significant proportion of those experiencing accessibility challenges.¹ As such, the City conducts planning specifically for disability communities through multi-year accessibility plans, and for an aging population, through the [Age-Friendly Community Action Plan](#) (PDF).

Similarly, within the broader York Region, close to 20 per cent of the population identifies as living with a disability. The disability profile across the region is diverse, with varying levels of severity and functional limitations. The most common types of disabilities reported include mobility, flexibility, pain-related and cognitive or mental health-related disabilities.

The demographic trends in Vaughan and York Region indicate a growing and aging population, which is likely to result in an increased prevalence of disability in the years ahead. These trends underscore the importance of prioritizing accessibility and inclusion in our community planning efforts, thereby promoting the ability of Vaughan residents to age in place while simultaneously contributing to a community more inclusive of diverse people with disabilities.





By understanding the unique needs and challenges faced by people with disabilities in Vaughan and York Region, we can develop and implement more effective strategies and initiatives as part of the MYAP. Building on our community engagement and deepening relationships of trust with diverse disability communities and subject-matter experts will help us effectively deliver on this MYAP. Demographic data, community consultations, user feedback

and other measures to evaluate progress on this MYAP will strengthen future decision-making on policy, planning and practice.

This data-driven, evidence-based approach will enable us to create a more accessible and inclusive city that fosters equal opportunities and an enhanced quality of life for all residents, businesses and visitors.

¹ Note that data is drawn from the 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability (CSD). Statistics Canada is scheduled to begin releasing results from the 2022 CSD by early 2024.

City of Vaughan
2141 Major Mackenzie Dr.
Vaughan, ON L6A 1T1
accessibility@vaughan.ca
vaughan.ca/accessibility

