



Municipality of West Grey

Multi-year accessibility plan

2020-2024

Introduction

Under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), Ontario organizations, including municipalities, are required to develop a multi-year accessibility plan to help make Ontario accessible by 2025.

West Grey's first multi-year accessibility plan was passed in 2013 and was based on the municipality's 2009 accessibility policy. The plan provided the municipality with the groundwork necessary to reduce barriers and promote inclusiveness.

The new West Grey multi-year accessibility plan builds on this work and reaffirms the commitment to accessibility across the municipality.

The 2020–2024 West Grey multi-year accessibility plan was developed in concert with the West Grey accessibility advisory committee, employee observations and best practice research. The plan satisfies several goals outlined in the West Grey Strategic Vision Plan 2019-2022 including strategies around clear communication and creating a vibrant community.

The plan is organized around five standards: customer service; information and communication; employment; transportation; and the design of public buildings and spaces and provides guidelines for procurement and staff training.

An accessible West Grey means:

- » Persons with disabilities receive quality goods and services in a timely manner.
- » Information and communications from the municipality are available in accessible formats.
- » Persons with disabilities are able to participate fully and meaningfully as employees, elected officials, committee members, volunteers, customers or any other stakeholder.
- » There is greater accessibility into, out of, and around West Grey facilities and public spaces.
- » West Grey employees are able to continually identify barriers to accessibility and actively seek solutions to prevent or remove them.
- » West Grey works with the community to educate and promote accessibility and inclusiveness.

Statement of commitment

The Municipality of West Grey values the contributions of all residents and visitors and believes these contributions enhance our community spirit.

The municipality is committed to building an inclusive society and providing an accessible environment in which all individuals have access to our programs and services in a way that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities.

The municipality supports the goals of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act and will establish policies, practices, and procedures for customer service, information and communication, employment, transportation, and design of public buildings and spaces to meet or exceed accessibility standards established under the AODA.

The municipality will continue to prevent barriers by designing inclusively and supporting positive approaches that address attitudes which undervalue and restrict the potential of persons with disabilities.

In working toward its goals under this statement, the municipality is committed to meeting the requirements of existing legislation and to its own policies and goals related to the identification, removal and prevention of barriers to people with disabilities and becoming a barrier-free community.

Core principals

The municipality will adopt and be guided by four core principles as outlined in the AODA:

Dignity. Service is provided in a way that allows persons with disabilities to maintain self-respect and the respect of others.

Independence. All people are allowed to do things on their own without unnecessary help or interference from others.

Integration. Services are provided in a way that all persons with disabilities can benefit from the same services, in the same place, and in the same or similar way as other customers unless an alternate measure is necessary to enable persons with disabilities to access goods or services.

Equal opportunity. Service is provided to persons with disabilities in such a way that they have an opportunity to access goods and services equal to that given to others.

Barriers

This multi-year plan will help West Grey to identify, address and remove barriers limiting full participation in programs, services and local democracy. **These may include:**

Physical barrier. Buildings, public spaces or features that restrict or impede physical access. Example: a doorway that is too narrow to accommodate a person using a motorized scooter or wheelchair.

Communication barrier. An obstacle that prevents the transfer, processing or interpreting of information. Example: a print brochure with text too small to read, or a document posted on the website without accessibility tags for screen-reading software.

Attitudinal barrier. Prejudgments and assumptions that directly or indirectly discriminate. Example: assuming all visually impaired persons can read Braille or treating a support person as if they are the client.

Technological barrier. When technology cannot or is not modified to support various assistive devices and/or software. Example: a website that doesn't provide for increased text sizes or alternate text descriptions for images.

Systemic barrier. Policies, practices and procedures that do not consider accessibility. Example: eligibility criteria that excludes people based on disability, such as requiring an employee to stand for long hours where there are ways to reorganize the position to do the work from a sitting position.

Definition of disability

Currently the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act defines disability broadly and states disability can happen at birth or through injury or illness.

There are several types of disability and may include physical disabilities such as diabetes, epilepsy, brain injury, paralysis, amputation, loss of co-ordination, visual impairment, hearing impairment or speech impairment. Disability may also include reliance on a service animal, wheelchair or other assistive devices.

Other disabilities may include: mental impairment or developmental disability, learning disability, mental health disability or an injury or disability that allows someone to claim or receive benefits under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act.

Disability sometimes affects how people's bodies move, or how they perceive or communicate. Some disabilities are visible and others are considered invisible. Moreover, there are different degrees of disability.

This definition of disability focuses on how people's bodies and minds differ. It should be noted, there have been calls for an updated definition within the AODA to help people better understand how these differences impact people's daily lives. An updated definition would focus on how barriers in structures and services exclude people with impairments.

Customer service

The municipality provides services to more than 13,000 residents, businesses and thousands of visitors each year. Accessible customer service is fundamental to meeting the needs of the community and should be woven into workplace culture and operational procedure.

Our vision

West Grey is committed to providing goods and services to all residents of our community. We strive to offer the same opportunity for members of the public to access municipal goods using all reasonable efforts, regardless of disability, in similar or alternative formats.

Municipal goods will be provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities.

Municipal staff will take into account all goods or services their department provides to the public and integrate/accommodate, whether temporarily or on a permanent basis, to enable a person with a disability to obtain, use, or benefit from the good or service.

The municipality shall ensure that all residents, including persons with disabilities, are given equal opportunity to obtain, use and benefit from the good or service.

Our commitment

West Grey will continue to ensure every person who deals with members of the public or other third parties on behalf of the municipality will work within an accommodating environment and provide goods and services in a courteous, timely and accessible manner.

The municipality will review its training program and provide up-to-date training to employees, volunteers and council on Ontario's accessibility laws and on the Human Rights Code as it relates to people with disabilities. Training will be provided in a way that best suits the duties of employees, volunteers and other staff members.

All new and returning employees and volunteers will receive accessibility training at orientation.

Information and communication

Communicating and providing information in a variety of methods that work for all residents and visitors is a cornerstone of building an accessible organization.

Our vision

The municipality is committed to meeting the communication needs of people with disabilities. We will deliver municipal communications in a variety of methods and provide several avenues for feedback from persons with disabilities.

Our commitment

Perform annual audits to ensure the municipal website (www.westgrey.com) and content available on the site meets or exceeds WCAG 2.0 AA standards.

Train staff in methods to make documents more readable for those accessing documents by screen readers or other assistive devices.

Continue to promote a variety of methods for people to provide feedback.

Add plain language summaries to municipal documents.

Provide print material in large-font format and/or alternate formats on request.

Continue to notify and promote the availability of accessible formats and communication supports.

Employment

The process of finding, getting and keeping a job with the municipality must be inclusive and accessible in order to build an effective team.

Our vision

The municipality is committed to fair and accessible employment practices.

Our commitment

All job postings will include the following statement: “The municipality is an equal opportunity employer. Accommodations are available for all parts of the recruitment process. Applicants need to make their needs known in advance.”

The municipality will review and update its back-to-work policies for employees absent due to a disability.

The municipality will continue to ensure the accessibility needs of employees in all aspects of their ability to work in a safe and inclusive environment including career development, performance management and redeployment opportunities.

Transportation

Getting from place to place safely and affordably in the municipality means that residents and visitors can enjoy all that the community has to offer.

Our vision

To ensure residents and visitors are able to travel safely and affordably throughout West Grey. This would include parking spaces for accessibility vehicles, accessible pathways and trails and ensuring families with strollers can also move through municipal spaces.

Our commitment

Review municipal parking lots to ensure accessible parking and appropriate signage.

Ensure taxicabs do not charge a higher fee or additional fee for persons with disabilities.

Ensure taxicabs do not charge a higher fee for storage of assistive devices.

Ensure taxicabs have appropriate information displayed both on the rear bumper and available in accessible format to passengers.

Promote and advocate accessible transportation for any systems running through West Grey including Saugeen Mobility and Regional Transit (SMART), Grey Transit Route (GTR) and Guelph Owen Sound Transportation (GOST).

Design of public buildings and spaces

The municipality is home to beautiful open spaces, parks, trails and wilderness. Residents and visitors should feel welcome to explore our public spaces, use municipal amenities and access facilities in a safe and barrier free manner.

Our vision

Residents and visitors of all ages will be able to take advantage of the accessible features of our public spaces and municipal facilities.

Our commitment

Annual audits of public buildings and spaces to identify barriers.

Add accessible facilities to the online Grey County accessibility map.

Ensure outdoor public pavilions are accessible including tables, washrooms, stable surfaces etc.

Review West Grey playgrounds; adopt the Rick Hansen guide to creating accessible play spaces.

Ensure accessible facilities are listed on popular way-finding applications and maps.

Ensure outdoor paths are accessible; clear widths, ramps etc.



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This document is available in alternate formats.

Should you have any ideas or feedback about this plan
or initiatives to help reduce barriers please call 519-369-2200 or
email: communications@westgrey.com