

Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

2024 to 2029



The Corporation of the Town of Essex

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Message from the Town of Essex Accessibility Advisory Committee

I am proud to lead the Town’s Accessibility Advisory Committee. The Members of this Committee are committed to applying the principles of inclusiveness and integration in reviewing projects undertaken within the Town and supporting various initiatives that will improve accessibility in services, programs, and facilities.

Over the years, the Accessibility Advisory Committee has supported various accessibility initiatives aimed at creating a welcoming and accessible community that allows all members to be engaged and participate, as well as assisting the Town in meeting its legislative requirements. The Committee has added focus on outdoor facilities, and initiatives in this plan will demonstrate this commitment.

We have and will continue to work together with the Council and Administration of the Town of Essex to identify, remove, and prevent barriers. We continue to build on past successes by looking for new ways to better meet the needs of people with disabilities.

On behalf of the Essex Accessibility Advisory Committee, I would like to extend our appreciation to Council and Administration for supporting our work and collaborating with us to address the areas that impact persons with disabilities and their families.

Corrine Bridger, Chair
Essex Accessibility Committee (2023)



Background

Persons with disabilities represent a large and growing part of our population. One in seven people in Ontario have a disability—that translates into 2.23 million Ontarians. When these statistics are applied to the Town of Essex, potentially 3,000 of our 21,000 residents live with a disability. As our population ages, it is anticipated that the percentage of people with disabilities will increase significantly reaching 1 in 5 people by end of 2036.

Currently there are two pieces of accessibility legislation in Ontario that strive to recognize the importance of the statistics related to persons with disabilities—the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) and the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA).

The AODA provides the framework for the development of province-wide mandatory standards on accessibility, which relate to both the private and public sector, and includes non-profit organizations.

Ontario now has accessibility standards in five areas, namely:

1. Customer service

- providing goods and services in an accessible manner,

2. Employment

- accommodating and supporting individuals with disabilities throughout the recruitment and employment process,

3. Information and Communications

- creating, providing, and receiving information and communications in ways that are accessible for people with disabilities,

4. Transportation

- Preventing and removing barriers in transportation, making it easier for everyone to travel in Ontario, and

5. Design of Public Spaces (Built Environment)

- Removing barriers in public spaces and buildings.

About the Town of Essex Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

Under the AODA accessibility planning requirements, municipalities are required to prepare a Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, rather than an annual plan. The Town of Essex Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (the “Plan”) outlines the Town’s strategy to remove and prevent accessibility barriers over the period from 2024 to 2029. The Town’s multi-year plan will be available on the Town’s website and provided in an accessible format.

The Plan for the Town of Essex was prepared by Town administration, in conjunction with the Essex Accessibility Advisory Committee. As part of a public consultation process, this plan will be available for public input for a three-week period prior to the Plan being presented to Town of Essex Council for adoption.

Essex Accessibility Advisory Committee

The Essex Accessibility Advisory Committee (EAAC) was established by Council resolution in 2002. Committee members are appointed by resolution of Council and must be comprised of the following:

- Six to twelve members, with representation from people with various disabilities,
- One member of Council, and
- Mayor of the Town of Essex, ex officio.



For the term 2022 to 2026, the following individuals have been appointed by Council to serve on the EAAC, and are on the Committee at the time of publishing:

- Corrine Bridger, Chair
- Richard Kokovai
- Linda Parker
- Michael Pacuta
- Sherri Currie
- Beth Oakley
- Tara Lauzon
- Sandi Whittaker
- Kurt Schroeder
- Councilor, Brad Allard



Courtney Pake, the Facility Clerk with the Town of Essex, serves as the Committee's Secretary. As well, various members of the Town's administrative staff are available to provide technical support to the Committee as required.

Jake Morassut, Director, Community Services, provides support to the Committee as municipal staff who regularly attend the EAAC meetings. Municipal staff have been appointed by Council to provide support to the Committee and act as liaison between the Town and the Committee.

A Terms of Reference, as amended from time to time, outlines the Committee's mandate, which includes the following:

- Advising Council in each year about the preparation, implementation, and effectiveness of its accessibility plan.
- Advising Council on the accessibility for persons with disabilities to a building, structure or premises, or part of a building, structure, or premises:
 - That which the Council purchases, constructs, or significantly renovates.
 - For which the Council enters a new lease; or

- That a person provides as municipal capital facilities under an agreement entered with the Council in accordance with section 110 of the Municipal Act, 2001.
- Reviewing in a timely manner the site plans and drawings described in section 41 of the Planning Act that the committee selects.
- At the request of Council, reviewing and providing advice to Council on the accessibility for persons with disabilities regarding a service performed by the Town, a purchase of service by the Town, and/or the scope and effect of by-law.

Members, both current and past, of the Essex Accessibility Advisory Committee have been instrumental in identifying barriers that they believe need to be addressed in the Town of Essex. Appendix 'A' provides details of some of the activities, which the Committee has been involved in during the period 2010 to 2023.

Definitions

The following definitions are as cited by the Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)

Accessibility: The term accessibility means giving people of all abilities opportunities to participate fully in everyday life. It is used to describe how widely a service, product, device, or environment is available to as many people as possible. Accessibility can be seen as the ability to access and benefit from a system, service, product, or environment. Ontario has laws to improve accessibility for people with disabilities, including the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), the Ontario Human Rights Code, and the Ontario Building Code.

Accessibility Policies: Are the formal rules an organization puts in place to achieve its accessibility goals.

Accessibility Plan: An Accessibility Plan outlines what steps an organization will take to prevent and remove barriers to accessibility and when it will do so.

AODA: The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) seeks to ensure that all Ontarians have fair and equitable access to programs and services and to improve opportunities for persons with disabilities. The Act addresses barriers in Customer Service;

Information and Communication; Employment; Transportation; the Design of Public Spaces.

Barrier: A barrier is a circumstance or obstacle that limits access and prevents people with disabilities from fully participating in society and keeps people apart. For people with disabilities, barriers can take many forms including attitudinal barriers, informational and communication barriers, technological barriers, systemic barriers, physical and architectural barriers, policy, programmatic, social, and transportation barriers.

Examples of Barrier Types include but are not limited to the following:

- **Physical Barriers:** Features, buildings or spaces that restrict or impede physical access. An example, a tap or doorknob that cannot be operated by a person with limited upper-body mobility or strength. Or poor facility/room lighting that makes it difficult for a person with low vision or a person who lip-reads to see.
- **Architectural Barriers:** A building with steps/curbs with no wheelchair ramp access, or a hallway or door jamb that is not wide enough to accommodate a wheelchair, walker, or scooter.
- **Informational Barriers:** Are information printed in a font too small to be read by a person with low vision or electronic documents that are not properly formatted and cannot be read by a screen reader.
- **Communicational Barriers:** A person who speaks too loudly when addressing a person with a hearing impairment or providing a microphone for a large public meeting or forum for persons with hearing impairment. This can include obstacles with processing, transmitting or interpreting information.
- **Attitudinal Barriers:** Prejudgments or assumptions that directly or indirectly discriminate. For example, staff addressing a Care Giver or Attendant instead of speaking directly to the person with a disability or staff ignoring someone in a wheelchair.
- **Systemic Barriers:** A hiring program that does not offer accommodations in interviews or policies, practices or procedures that result in some people receiving unequal access or being excluded. For example, listing a driver's license as an

employment qualification for an office position may prohibit persons with visual impairments from applying.

- **Technological Barrier:** Electronic documents without accessibility features, such as alternative text (Alt Text), that screen readers read to describe an image or providing handouts only in hard copies instead of both electronic and hard copy.

Disability: A disability is a physical or mental condition that limits a person's movements, senses, or activities. The AODA uses the same definition of disability as the Ontario Human Rights Code which defines it broadly as:

- a. "any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation, or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, blindness, or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device;
- b. a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,
- c. a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,
- d. a mental disorder, or
- e. an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997."

IASR: The AODA has five Standards which are included in the Integrated Accessibility Standards (IASR). These include the Customer Service Standard; Employment Standard; Information and Communication Standard; Design of Public Spaces Standard; the Transportation Standard; as well as some general requirements pertaining to procurement and purchasing as well as, staff, volunteer, and third-party training in the AODA Standards.

OBC: The Ontario Building Code Act is the legislative framework governing the construction,

renovation, and change-of-use of a building. The Ontario Building Code (OBC) is a regulation under the Act that establishes detailed technical and administrative requirements as well as minimum standards for building construction. The Act was amended on January 1, 2019, to include requirements that enhance accessibility in newly constructed buildings and existing buildings that are to be extensively renovated.

Standard: The Act operates by bringing accessibility standards into regulation. Accessibility standards are laws that individuals, government, businesses, non-profits, and public sector organizations must follow to become more accessible. The accessibility standards contain timelines for the implementation of required measures and help organizations identify, remove, and prevent barriers to improve accessibility for people with disabilities.

About the Town of Essex

The Town of Essex is located in southwestern Ontario, approximately 28 kilometers southeast of the City of Windsor and is one of the seven lower-tier municipalities in the County of Essex. Its rich agricultural lands are some of the most productive in the province and its numerous wineries have a well-deserved national reputation.

The Town of Essex with a population approximately 21,000 is comprised of four distinct and unique communities – Essex Centre, Harrow, Colchester, and McGregor.

Council for the Town of Essex is comprised of eight members with each representing the four centres within the Town as follows:

- Mayor – one member,
- Deputy Mayor – One member,
- Essex Centre – two members,
- Harrow – one member,
- Colchester – two members, and
- McGregor – one member.

The Mayor and Deputy Mayor of the Town of Essex are elected at large.

The Town provides a host of services, including all aspects of transportation, both vehicular and active transportation, community facilities and programs, protection to persons and property, including fire, police and animal control, health services such as cemeteries, parks, environmental services including water, wastewater and garbage collection and disposal and planning and development.

Commitment to Accessibility

The Town of Essex is committed to ensuring equal access and participation for people with disabilities. We are committed to treating people with disabilities in a way that allows them to maintain their dignity and independence. We believe in integration, and we are committed to meeting the needs of people with disabilities in a timely manner. We will do so by removing and preventing barriers to accessibility and meeting our accessibility requirements under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act and Ontario's accessibility laws.

The Town is committed to following, maintaining, and implementing the following accessibility policies:

Training

The Town of Essex is committed to training staff and volunteers in Ontario's accessibility laws and aspects of the Ontario Human Rights Code that relate to persons with disabilities.

We will train our employees and volunteers on accessibility as it relates to their specific roles.

Procurement

The Town will incorporate accessibility criteria and features when procuring or acquiring goods, services, or facilities, including self-serve kiosks. If it is not possible and practical to do so, we will provide an explanation upon request.

Self-Service Kiosks

The Town will incorporate accessibility features/consider accessibility for people with

disabilities when designing, procuring, or acquiring self-service kiosks.

Information and Communications

We will communicate with people with disabilities in ways that consider their disability. When asked, we will provide information about our organization and its services, including public safety information, in accessible formats or with communication supports.

We will also meet internationally recognized Web Content Accessibility Guideline (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA website requirements in accordance with Ontario accessibility laws.

Employment

The Town will notify employees, potential hires and the public that accommodations can be made during recruitment and hiring.

We will notify staff that supports are available for those with disabilities. We will put in place a process to develop individual accommodation plans for employees.

Where needed, we will also provide customized emergency information to help an employee with a disability during an emergency.

Our performance management, career development and redeployment processes will consider the accessibility needs of all employees.

Design of Public Spaces

The Town of Essex will meet accessibility laws when building or making major changes to public spaces. Public spaces include:

- Recreational trails/beach access routes,
- Outdoor public eating areas like picnic areas,
- Outdoor play spaces, like playground in municipal parks and local communities,
- Outdoor paths of travel, like sidewalks, ramps, stairs, curb ramps, rest areas and accessible pedestrian signals,

- Accessible off-street parking,
- Accessible on-street parking, and
- Service-related elements like service counters, fixed queuing lines and waiting areas.

We will put procedures in place to prevent service disruptions to our accessible parts of our public spaces.

Changes to Existing Policies

The Town will modify or remove an existing policy that does not respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities.

And further, The Town is committed to building an inclusive community. Accessibility means much more than people getting through the front door or receiving special services. The Town remains committed to providing inclusive and integrated services and ensuring that all customers have a positive customer service experience in a manner that:

- respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities and is sensitive to their individual needs,
- ensures reasonable efforts are made to ensure that service outcomes are the same for persons with disabilities as they are for persons without disabilities, and
- allows persons with disabilities to benefit from the same services as those without disabilities in the same location and in a timely and similar manner considering the nature of the service and accommodations required.

The Town continues to improve accessibility of facilities, programs, and services. The Town believes that navigating easily in and around buildings and offices, accessing services and information in an appropriate format, and working in an accommodating environment are important parts of accessibility for everyone, including people with disabilities.

Accessibility Initiatives Contained in the Multi-Year Plan

Schedule 'B' of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan outlines the strategies and actions to be taken by the Town to prevent and remove barriers for people with disabilities over the next five years. This schedule also includes the Town's strategy for meeting the timelines established in regulations enacted under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005.

Process for Reviewing and Monitoring Progress on the Multi-Year Plan

The Multi-Year Accessibility Plan will be updated at least once every five years. The Essex Accessibility Advisory Committee will review progress towards achieving initiatives identified in the plan on an on-going basis. The Multi-Year Plan will be available to the public on the Town website and through alternative accessible formats upon request.

Through the staff liaison's feedback will also be provided to the Committee on actions taken towards achieving initiatives contained in the Plan.

On an annual basis, the staff liaison, in conjunction with the Essex Accessibility Advisory Committee will provide Council with an update on the status of accessibility initiatives identified in the Multi-Year Plan that were undertaken in the current year as well as a report on the current year's accomplishments of the Essex Accessibility Advisory Committee over and above those initiatives identified in the Plan.

Feedback

The Town of Essex welcomes feedback, comments, or suggestions from the public on how the Town can improve accessibility in our facilities, parks, and all municipally owned properties and in the manner in which it provides goods and services. Any feedback, comments, or suggestions may be submitted using the Accessibility Feedback Form, which is available on the Town of Essex website www.essex.ca on the "Accessible Essex" page.

Schedule A

Activities of Essex Accessibility Advisory Committee

2010 to 2023

Review of Site Plans and Rezoning Applications

Various site plans and rezoning applications were reviewed by the Committee, including:

- Dave Hitchcock Chevrolet,
- Milton Dzodin,
- Dr. Gregory Hanaka Dentistry Assoc.,
- Essex District High School,
- Enerquest,
- Harrow Home Hardware,
- 1818631 Ontario Limited Inc.,
- Karl Lonsberry,
- North 42 Estate Winery,
- Brotto Investments Inc.,
- Mark Vickers/ATM Pharmacies,
- Pollmar Holdings Limited,
- Canadian Tire Properties Inc. (Essex),
- Essex County District School Board
- 2651 County Rd. 12,
- R & K Robinson Holdings,
- Properties located at 186-190 Talbot Street South, Essex,
- 1170 County Rd. 13, Colchester South,
- 22 Victor Street Apartments,
- 9529 County Road 11,
- 337 Maidstone Avenue East,
- 574 Grondin Ave,

- 1100 Ridge Road,
- 128 Talbot Street North,
- 3990 North Malden Road,
- 96 County Rd 50 West,
- 330 South Talbot Road,
- 9 Maidstone Avenue,
- 326 South Talbot Road,
- Colchester Heights Subdivision,
- 1030 Ridge Road,
- 340 Maidstone Avenue, and
- 14 Wilson Avenue.

Recommendations to Planning Department

Recommendation to the Planning Department that Site Plan Control require an accessible parking template on the asphalt and vertical accessible parking sign in an accessible parking spots. **(EAAC18-02-06)**

Review Plans for New Municipal Facilities

Plans for new municipal facilities were reviewed prior to construction, including:

- Fire Station 1,
- Tot Park Playground,
- Fire Station 2, and
- Town Hall renovations.

Consultations

Accessibility Certification Consultation by the Government of Ontario brought forward: That a notation be made that Phase 3 of the public consultation process on the model prototypes was forwarded for review and committee to the Committee on April 13, 2016. **(EAAC16-05-011)**

Accessibility Checklist

The Committee updated the checklist and arranged distribution of the checklist to businesses through the Town of Essex Fire Inspector and through the Essex Business Improvement Area. Additionally, a Sub-Committee of the EAAC performed a survey of accessible parking in Harrow and Colchester Centre which revealed there were sufficient spaces, but better signage and marking was required.

Review of Accessible Parking

The Committee performed the following with relation to accessible parking:

- Sub-Committee of the EAAC performed a survey of accessible parking in Harrow and Colchester Centre which revealed there were sufficient spaces, but better signage and marking was required.
- Director of Infrastructure and Development and the Manager of Operations met with the Committee to review all accessible parking in the Town of Essex, with Committee providing comment back to the Town.
- Ongoing review of requests for accessible parking or curb cuts during the four-year period, with some resulting in recommendations to Council.
- Recommended to Council that the fine for parking in accessible parking spaces without a permit be increased to \$300.00 from \$100.00. The recommendation was approved, and the Town By-Law was revised, along with the Set Fine Schedule.
- Committee requested the Town of Essex review the zoning by-law for parking amendments, specifically to those lots with under 25 spaces as accessible spots are not required in these circumstances.

Recommendations to Council through Resolutions

- That Council consider a new standalone grant under the C.I.P. (Community Improvement Program) in an amount up to \$6,000 for the installation of an accessible entrance in both Harrow and Essex Centre (**EEAC15-03-008**)
- That sidewalks be installed along Maidstone Avenue West to allow accessible

- pedestrian traffic to the McDonald's and Tim Horton's in Essex Centre. **(EEAC15-03-009)**
- (Re: Site Plan SPC-05-015 - 18, 190 Talbot St. S., Essex) That the number of accessible parking spaces be increased to five spaces and that these spaces be located by an accessible main entrance with appropriate curb cuts as the building is a healthcare facility. **(R15-09-020)**
 - That Council make a recommendation to the County of Essex to consider obtaining an Accessibility Coordinator for the County of Essex who would develop a program similar to "Breaking Barriers to Business" in Sarnia to equip businesses and agencies with the tools and resources needed to meet their requirements with Ontario's accessibility legislation. **(R15-10-024)** (Letter sent from Council to County 10/27/15)
 - That the department responsible for the bike path on Fairview Avenue West (Essex Centre) consider ways to improve access to the path for those using wheelchairs and other wheeled conveyances. **(R15-10-025)**
 - That the Town of Essex speak out in favour of the over 1.8 million Ontarians with physical, mental, sensory, learning, intellectual or communication disabilities who are facing unfair accessibility barriers every day when they seek employment, shop in stores, go to school, get health care services, find a home, eat in restaurants, or use public transit by pressing the Honourable Premier Wynne to effectively implement and enforce the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) to ensure that Ontario gets back on schedule to be fully accessible for people with disabilities By end of 2025, and further that a letter be drafted to the Taras Natyshak, M.P.P. and the County of Essex requesting their support. **(EAAC16-05-010)** (Letter sent from Council to Premier Wynne 4/26/16)
 - That an accessible parking space with appropriate signing be provided at the Essex Soccer Field and that if possible, it be placed near the entrance along the fence. **(EAAC16-05-014)**
 - That a manual lift for the Aquatics Centre dressing rooms be purchased for back up when the electronic lift is not available. **(EAAC16-11-028)**
 - That the Essex Accessibility Advisory Committee supports the request by Councillor

Voakes and the Department of Infrastructure and Development be advised that the Committee supports the elimination of the third parking space (closest to the crosswalks) in front of the Party Discount Store at 24 Talbot Street North. **(EAAC16-12-032)**

- That the Town of Essex continue with the ramp and mobi pad. **(EAAC17-09-008)**
- That Council direct administration to review and report back on the feasibility of ensuring that on all future major and new renovations to municipal intersections with pedestrian crosswalks, and that all upgraded or retrofitted infrastructure include Accessible Pedestrian Signals (APS) that provide auditory, visual and tactile information technology. **(EAAC19-06-017).**
- That Council to direct town administration to provide more media promotion regarding the availability of grants with the Town's updated Community Improvement Plans and further provide this information to the proper contacts at the Harrow Chamber of Commerce and the Essex Centre Business Improvement so they can further promote the grant opportunities. **(EAAC19-06-018).**
- That Council to have Administration review and report back on the feasibility of adding a secondary handicap spot on King Street in Harrow across the street from the CIBC to enable better access to the downtown businesses in that area for seniors, particularly the bank, hairdressers and chiropractor. **(EAAC19-06-019).**
- That Council to direct Administration to select a qualified staff member to receive the Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification (RHFAC) Accessibility Assessor Training Course to become a RHFAC Professional Designation or alternatively, to send a letter to County Council to send one qualified professional from one of the local municipalities to take the RHFAC Accessibility Assessor Training Course in a cost-sharing initiative in order to have a local certified professional within the County that can better identify accessibility barriers within the local municipalities of the County. **(EAAC19-06-020).**
- Recommendation to Council to direct Administration to select and approve a committee member and or administration member to attend the October 31 to November 1 Accessibility Professional Network Conference in Toronto. **(EAAC19-**

06-021).

- That Council support a letter being sent to ERCA regarding the accessibility issues as it pertains to the John R. Park Homestead and the new visitor's centre with a request that either paved or packed stone walkways be laid throughout the Homestead grounds to better accommodate those with accessible needs and requirements as well as the designated handicap parking spot. **(EAAC20-09-010).**
- That Council support a letter being sent to the County of Essex asking for paved sidewalk access on County Road 8 from Talbot Street to Highway 3 to better facilitate accessing the local restaurants and businesses by those walking, in particular, those with an accessible challenges or difficulties. **(EAAC20-09-011).**

Accessibility at Municipal Facilities

- Toured various municipal, including Harrow Soccer Park, McGregor Community Centre and Library, Colchester Pirate Ship, Essex Sports Complex, Lion's Park, Bridlewood Park, Essex Recreation Complex, etc. and identified deficiencies as it relates to accessibility.
- Committee member appointed to Essex Streetscape Committee. (2010-2013)
- Tour of Town of Essex Facilities and proved list of issues that needed correction/improvement. (06/15/2015)
- Provided Town's Special Events Resources Team (SERT) Committee with checklist to aid in making fairs and other events accessible events (10/27/2015)
- Met with Norm Nussio, Assistant Manager, Operations/Drainage Superintendent to receive information and provide comment on Town of Essex crosswalks. (06/14/2016)
- Accessibility Checklist was reviewed, updated and provided for distribution to the Essex Fire Department to the businesses when the Fire Department does fire inspections. (11/08/2016)
- Information regarding the availability of funding through the Government of Canada's Enabling Accessibility Fund was forwarded to the Essex Centre BIA and the Harrow Chamber of Commerce (06/14/2016)

- Sent correspondence to the Essex County Library and the Union encouraging both parties to return to the bargaining table to resolve the labour dispute due to the barrier the strike was creating for those who depended on the library for internet services, large print and audio books and research material (11/08/2016) (Letter sent)
- Sent correspondence to CIBC encouraging the installation of a vertical accessible parking sign in their private parking lot. (sign was installed June 2018) (02/01/2018)
- Reviewed the Municipal Election Accessibility Plan 2018 (06/14/2018)
- Met with concerned citizen regarding various accessibility issues throughout the Town of Essex. (06/14/2018)
- Met with Tactile Vision & Canada Blindsquare regarding providing accessible mapping by braille or by mobile app for individuals with low vision in the Essex Recreation Centre. (06/14/2018)
- Accessible Events Booklets to be given to SERTS for distribution to people planning events and linked on our web page for information (02/01/2018)

Town Accessible Implementations

- An Accessible Customer Service Policy and training program has been implemented and is provided to all management, union and non-union staff, students, members of Council, members of a Committees of Council, and Volunteers who are either employed by the town or acting on behalf of the town since 10/19/2009,
- Customer Service Initial Complaint and Feedback form accessible to public since October 2009 in all media formats,
- Guide Dogs or other Service Animals permitted to enter those areas of premises owned and operated by the Town that are typically open to the public unless the animal is excluded by law,
- Town of Essex launched their website to improve accessibility in 2013,
- January 13, 2014, Town implemented Employment Standard Policy in accordance with AODA Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation 191/11;

- By January 1, 2014, all website content, documents, and tools were compliant with the provincial standard, based on the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 Level A save and except criteria 1.2.4 (captions) and 1.2.5 (pre-recorded audio description). The Town of Essex is making every effort to be Level AA Compliant, which is the 2021 requirement,
- Where possible, documents (PDF, Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint) dated January 1, 2012, or later are posted to the Town's website as accessible documents,
- June 1, 2016, Injury Management Program and Return to Work Policy implemented and maintained for all Town employees,
- The Town continually reviews facilities, programs, and services in an effort to remove all barriers that may prevent persons with disabilities who use an assistive device from participating in or accessing programs, goods, services and facilities provided by the Town of Essex,
- Provide public with notice in the event of a planned or unexpected disruption of service or inaccessibility of facilities used by persons with disabilities by placing notices in all public entrances and service counters on Town premises. If the disruption is long-term, the Town posts notification announcements on our website and through social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter informing the public of the location, duration of disruption and alternative solutions available,
- On an ongoing and regular basis, and as per the applicable terms of the IASR, the Town of Essex reviews and assesses general workplace emergency response procedures and individualized emergency plans to ensure accessibility issues are addressed,
- Individualized workplace emergency response information procedures will be developed for Town of Essex employees with disabilities, as required,
- Use accessibility criteria and features when procuring or acquiring goods, services or facilities, except where it is not practical to do so,
- Implementation of 24/7 web based programming which tracks all employee training modules relevant to Town Policies and Procedures, all Health and Safety; requirements of the IASR, and any Ontario Human Rights Code as it pertains to

- persons with disabilities and provide alternative format to all employees who don't have access to this program and track training dates and further ensures through our Human Resources Manager that any changes to the prescribed policies be reviewed on an ongoing basis,
- Partnership established between Town and the Colchester Schoolhouse Community Garden establishing a community garden featuring accessible raised beds and accessible pathways surrounding each bed,
 - Ongoing roadway reconstruction and resurfacing with the addition of Tactile Walking Surface Indicators (TWSI's) and audible pedestrian signals when adding new or replacing existing Pedestrian signals,
 - Ongoing curb-cuts and/or depressed curbs are constructed to improve access and safety in accordance with AODA Standards,
 - Mobi-Mat donation by the David Watsa family in 2018 provided the supply and installation of mobi-mat to access the waters of Lake Erie and travel barrier free on the beach sand of Colchester Harbour,
 - Recycled rubberized playground surfaces at Essex Tot Park, Harrow Playground, and the McGregor playground,
 - Accessible Pirate Ship playground with rubberized surface at the Colchester Harbour,
 - Accessible splash pads in Essex, Harrow and Colchester,
 - Installation of barrier free accessible ramp from the Colchester Harbour upper parking lot to the Colchester Community Room,
 - Installation of barrier free accessible ramp from the Colchester Park to the beach,
 - Deep and Shallow Aquafit programming offered at aquatic facility,
 - Installation of Hydorrider Aquabikes provide Spin H2O classes offered at our aquatic centre,
 - Added paved pathways throughout the municipality,
 - Added accessible picnic tables at Co-An Park as partnership with Amherstburg;
 - Implementation of NaviLens throughout Town of Essex recreational facilities and community rooms,

- Upgraded front doors of Essex Centre Sports Complex to all automatic sliding doors,
- Upgraded doors at the top of the stairs at the Essex Centre Sports Complex to automatic sliding doors,
- Added new accessible washrooms to Heritage Gardens Park,
- Updated the Field House washroom for LIFE tenant to ensure washroom meets accessibility standards,
- Added larger door openings and push buttons at the Lion's Hall,
- Essex Recreation Complex provides the following accessible features:
 - Easy ladder into lap pool
 - Submerged ramp into leisure pool
 - Railings on stairs into training pool
 - Submergible pool wheelchair
 - Submerged therapy bars in training pool
 - Tilting shower/commode wheelchair
 - Private accessible washroom with shower, change table and transportable ceiling lift.

Schedule B – Planned Initiatives 2024 – 2029

Accessibility Initiative	Action to be Taken	Timeframe
General Requirements	Continue to review and update policies/procedures/forms to reflect legislative changes	Ongoing through 2029
	Committee review and collaboration on the Accessibility Compliance Reports prior being filed with the Ministry in accordance with ministry standards (bi-annually) and ensure reports are available to the public on town website and through alternative formats	Ongoing through 2029
Customer Service Standard	Continue to fulfill the needs of residents and customers under the Accessible Customer Service Standard	Ongoing through 2029
	Continue to receive, monitor, and respond to Accessible Feedback and ensure processes are accessible to persons with disabilities	Ongoing through 2029
	Continue to post service disruptions at all municipal facilities and ensure public notification is made through multi-media	Ongoing through 2029

Accessibility Initiative	Action to be Taken	Timeframe
	communications i.e., website, Facebook, Twitter etc.	
	Continue to review and update where necessary, accessible Customer Service Policies	Ongoing through 2029
	Ensure all tender documents contain the requirement that vendors must certify that they and their staff have received training in accessible customer service	Ongoing through 2029
Employment Standard	Continue to provide training on the Integrated Accessibility Standards Policy to all elected Officials, Employees and Volunteers	Ongoing through 2029
	Address barriers to employment with the Town of Essex for people with disabilities and address accommodation requirements of existing employees with disabilities	Ongoing through 2029
	Continue to provide training to Employees on the requirements of the Ontario Human Rights Code as it relates to the employment of Persons with Disabilities	Ongoing through 2029

Accessibility Initiative	Action to be Taken	Timeframe
	Continue to regularly review the Human Resources Policies to ensure the inclusion of means to prevent and remove systemic employment barriers and further ensure they are compliant with legislation and reflect best practices	Ongoing through 2029
	Continue to provide employees with mental health training and ensure all staff are aware of the availability to accommodate and include persons with disabilities	Ongoing through 2029
	Continue to provide Training to employees on the requirements of the Ontario Human Rights Code as it relates to the employment of persons with disabilities	Ongoing through 2029
	Continue to comply with the legislated requirements for Recruitment, Workplace Emergency Response Information, Return to Work Process, Performance Management, Career Development and Advancement and Redeployment	Ongoing through 2029
	Continue to provide or arrange for the provisions of accessible formats and communication supports for all employees.	Ongoing through 2029

Accessibility Initiative	Action to be Taken	Timeframe
Information and Communications Standard	Continue to offer reports, documents, forms and other public information in accessible formats and provide alternative format when requested	Ongoing through 2029
	Continue to provide training to staff members on the creation of accessible documents and forms	Ongoing through 2029
	Continue to ensure all documents for Council and the public are posted to the town website are in accessible formats (including agendas, minutes, reports to council, financial information, tender documents etc.	Ongoing through 2029
	Continue to provide Emergency Procedures, plans and public safety information in accessible formats and in alternative formats upon request	Ongoing through 2029
	Continue to monitor accessible website and web content compliance in accordance with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)	Ongoing through 2029

Accessibility Initiative	Action to be Taken	Timeframe
	Ensure all websites and web content conforms with the Information and Communications Standard / WCAG 2.0 Level AA	Ongoing through 2029
	Provide and promote, where applicable, that all municipal documents are available in alternative format and ensure all staff are aware of the commitment	Ongoing through 2029
	Continue to ensure staff are educated on the need for accessible documents and the provision of providing accessible formats upon request	Ongoing through 2029
	Monitor process for receiving Accessibility Feedback and Comments to ensure that response is provided in a timely manner and appropriate action is taken, as required	Ongoing through 2029
	Continue to make available means for Accessible Feedback from the public and persons with disabilities and review and make recommendations to council and staff on remedies to accommodate persons with disabilities	Ongoing through 2029

Accessibility Initiative	Action to be Taken	Timeframe
Transportation Standard	Address barriers in transportation to accommodate people with disabilities to be able to live, work and participate within the community	Ongoing through 2029
	Through Public Consultation, determine the demand for accessible transportation in the Town and review the current services provided to persons with disabilities	By end of 2026
	Perform site visits of bus stops/shelters to identify barriers of persons with disabilities and communicate barriers to town	Ongoing through 2029
	Initiate a public media campaign to provide information regarding available accessible transportation options within the town to persons with disabilities	Ongoing through 2029
Procurement Standard	Continue to ensure accessible goods and services are made available and procured by municipal staff	Ongoing through 2029
	Continue to regularly review the Procurement and Disposal of Goods and Services policies to ensure they are compliant with	Ongoing through 2029

Accessibility Initiative	Action to be Taken	Timeframe
	current legislation and reflect best practices	
Design of Public Space Standard/Built Environment	Continue to remove barriers in public buildings and spaces throughout the municipality	Ongoing through 2029
	Ensure Self Service Kiosks incorporate accessibility features when designing, procuring, or renovating any municipal public information centres	Ongoing through 2029
	Continue to meet technical requirements and consulting the public when constructing new or redeveloped municipal recreational trails, outdoor public use eating areas, outdoor public spaces, exterior paths of travel, accessible parking both on and off the street, service counters, fixed queuing guides and waiting areas	Ongoing through 2029
	Continue to comply with legislative requirements for all municipal Recreational Trails and Beach Access, Outdoor Public Eating Areas, Outdoor Play Spaces, Exterior Paths of Travel – Ramps, Stairs, Curb Ramps, Depressed Curbs, Accessible	Ongoing through 2029

Accessibility Initiative	Action to be Taken	Timeframe
	Pedestrian Control Signals, Accessible Parking, Service Counters and Waiting Areas	
	Continue to comply with the Barrier-Free Design of the Ontario Building Code for all new construction and major renovations	Ongoing through 2029
Essex Accessibility Advisory Committee Initiatives	Continue to review all accessible parking in the municipality in conjunction with public works and make recommendations for changes, new accessible parking spaces, curb-cuts etc.	Ongoing through 2029
	Continue to review all sidewalks in the municipality with public works and make recommendations for changes, repairs, and new accessible sidewalks etc.	Ongoing through 2029
	Continue to perform site visits to Town owned facilities that are accessed by the public to identify barriers for persons with disabilities and communicate barriers to the Town	Ongoing through 2029
	Continue to provide information to Council regarding National and International initiatives in accessibility	Ongoing through 2029

Accessibility Initiative	Action to be Taken	Timeframe
	Continue to provide Council with proclamation requests for Canadian's National Accessibility week	Ongoing through 2029
	Continue to explore and recommend training opportunities with the focus on furthering the municipality's goal in removing barrier and creating an accessible and inclusive town	Ongoing through 2029
	Ensure all documents provided in alternative formats are at no additional cost to persons with disabilities	Ongoing through 2029
	Ensure Town Hall adds accessible buttons to the lobby washrooms (outside of Council Chambers)	By end of 2025
	Ensure Town Hall has accessible entrance signage	By end of 2024
	Ensure low spot at the bottom of the ramp outside of Town hall is repaired to prevent water from freezing	By end of 2024
	Provide additional shaded areas at the McGregor Community Centre Park	By end of 2026

Accessibility Initiative	Action to be Taken	Timeframe
	Ensure Gesto Office has transition to ramp adjusted as there is an uneven surface	By end of 2024
	Ensure Gesto Office doorway to planning mitigates the trip hazard	By end of 2024
	Ensure accessible parking spaces and no parking area are defined outside of "LIFE"	By end of 2024
	Add accessible buttons for washrooms at Essex Centre Sports Complex in the Shaheen Room	By end of 2024
	Ensure battery for chair lift is repaired, or alternate solution is completed	By end of 2024
	Continue to review all festival, tourism, and other municipal grant opportunities to ensure that the needs of persons with disabilities have been taken into consideration and provide recommendations as required	Ongoing through 2029
	Host an educational event for community businesses with the	Ongoing through 2029

Accessibility Initiative	Action to be Taken	Timeframe
	focus on sharing information on Customer Service, AODA Standards, and other general education as it pertains to accessibility and inclusiveness	
	Attend an information sharing forum hosted by the County of Essex Accessibility Advisory Committees County to exchange knowledge and best practices on an annual basis	Ongoing through 2029
	Establish a retrofit design document that will assist businesses to make their facilities more accessible	By end of 2024
	Ensure a solution is created for the Colchester Park accessible parking area as the stones and potholes prevent this area from being accessible	Ongoing through 2029
	Install accessible ramp for washrooms at Lions Hall	By end of 2024