



To: COUNCIL
Meeting Date: 10/14/2025
Subject: 2024-2028 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan
Submitted By: Jennifer Shaw, Acting City Clerk
Prepared By: Stephen Aboagye, EDIA Supervisor
Report No.: 25-041-CRS
File No.: Enter the File Number
Wards Affected: All Wards

RECOMMENDATION(S):

THAT Report 25-041-CRS 2024-2028 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan be adopted to promote and advance accessibility in the City of Cambridge.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA), municipalities are required to prepare multi-year accessibility plans. The 2024–2028 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP) is Cambridge’s second such plan, building on the foundation of the 2018–2021 plan.

Although the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan is titled “2024–2028”, it is being presented in 2025 to reflect the period of 2024-2028. While work on the plan began in 2022, several challenges, such as staff transitions, the impacts of COVID-19, and the time needed for meaningful consultation, led to delays and prevented completion of the plan in 2024. Despite these challenges, the City remained committed and focused on developing a plan that is thoughtful, inclusive, and responsive to community needs.

The City has made meaningful strides in identifying, preventing, and removing barriers. However, accessibility and ensuring the work around removing barriers for our community will always require commitment and progress. The 2024–2028 MYAP charts the next stage of this work, moving beyond minimum legislative requirements to reflect the City’s commitment to equity, inclusion, and accessibility.

Developed through best practice research and informed by consultation with the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC), City staff, residents, people with lived

experience of disability, and other stakeholders, the plan ensures community voices guide its priorities.

An accessible Cambridge means that:

- Persons with disabilities receive quality goods and services in a timely, inclusive way.
- Information and communications are available in accessible formats for employees, residents, visitors, and customers.
- Persons with disabilities can fully and meaningfully participate as City employees.
- City facilities and public spaces are designed, built, and maintained with accessibility in mind.
- Employees are supported and equipped to recognize barriers and implement solutions.

By adopting the 2024–2028 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, the City of Cambridge reaffirms its commitment to building a city where everyone belongs and can participate fully.

Purpose

This report seeks Council’s support for adopting the City of Cambridge’s Five-Year Accessibility Plan. Approving the plan confirms the City’s ongoing commitment to identifying, removing, and preventing barriers for people with disabilities. The plan outlines the City’s long-term strategy to meet accessibility compliance standards while promoting inclusion across municipal programs, services, and facilities.

Key Findings

- Developing a multi-year accessibility plan is a legislative requirement under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA). The 2024-2028 MYAP outlines the actions the City of Cambridge will take to meet and remove barriers to accessibility.
- The 2024–2028 MYAP builds on the City’s long-standing commitment to accessibility and inclusion. It provides a roadmap of focus areas and actions that will strengthen compliance while advancing accessibility across services, programs and facilities.
- Building on the previous accessibility plan, the 2024–2028 Plan introduces new actions aimed at making the City of Cambridge more accessible for all residents and visitors. This includes ongoing efforts to ensure compliance with AODA accessibility standards.
- The City of Cambridge is committed to fostering an inclusive workplace and community where everyone can participate with dignity and independence. This

includes advancing accessible programs, services, and facilities, and public spaces that support a vibrant, livable community.

- To ensure this plan reflects community needs, the City involved residents, staff, and stakeholders throughout its development. Feedback was collected through a public survey, consultation with the AAC, and engagement with community partners.

Financial Implications

There are no direct financial impacts associated with this report or through the adoption of the Plan. Implementation of the Plan will be supported through existing departmental operating budgets, as actions are prioritized and integrated into annual work plans. Where additional resources may be required, they will be considered through the City's standard budget development process. Staff will also actively monitor and pursue provincial, federal, and external funding opportunities to expand and enhance accessibility initiatives.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT:

Strategic Action

Objective(s): INCLUSION - Deliver accessible, diverse and inclusive services, programs and infrastructure for all ages and abilities

Strategic Action: Enhance equity and inclusion efforts

OR

Core Service

Program: Accessibility & Inclusion Services

Core Service: Accessibility and Inclusion Improvements and AODA Compliance

BACKGROUND:

In 2005, the Province of Ontario introduced the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA), to achieve an accessible Ontario by January 1, 2025. The Act mandates the development, implementation and enforcement of accessibility standards to ensure equitable access to goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, and the built environment for people with disabilities. Under the

Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR), Ontario Regulation 191/11, municipalities are required to develop a Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP) and review it at least once every five years. These plans outline the strategies and actions a municipality will take to identify, remove, and prevent barriers across five key areas:

1. Customer Service
2. Information and Communications
3. Employment
4. Transportation
5. Design of Public Spaces (Built Environment)

The City of Cambridge developed its first MYAP in 2018 through collaboration with Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility (EDIA) staff, the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC), individuals with disabilities, and key stakeholders. That plan focused on meeting phased-in IASR requirements and advancing compliance with provincial regulations.

The 2024–2028 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan builds on this foundation by providing a roadmap for continued progress. It identifies priority areas, highlights achievements to date, and introduces new initiatives that will guide the City’s accessibility efforts over the next five years.

Compliance and Inclusion Model

The EDIA team developed the ACCESS framework as a strategic model to guide and unify the City of Cambridge’s accessibility initiatives. This framework is designed to support both legislative compliance and the broader goal of inclusion. The framework is organized around six pillars:

- **Awareness & Advocacy**
- **Compliance**
- **Consultation & Collaboration**
- **Events**
- **Service/Support**
- **Systems & Strategies**

From a compliance perspective, the ACCESS Framework ensures that all legislated requirements are met by aligning City practices with standards such as AODA, FADS, OBC, and Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). It strengthens internal systems and policies, guarantees that public and internal events meet accessibility standards, and integrates compliance into corporate operations.

From an inclusion perspective, the framework fosters a culture of accessibility through training, outreach, and advocacy. It actively engages people with lived experience and community partners, enhances access to services, and embeds accessibility into

broader corporate strategies. By integrating both compliance and inclusion, the ACCESS Framework ensures that accessibility is proactively and sustainably incorporated across City programs, services, and facilities.

ANALYSIS:

Everyone deserves the opportunity to participate fully in society. In 2022, more than 8 million Canadians aged 15 and older, representing 27% of the population, identified as having one or more disabilities. Despite some progress, people with disabilities continue to face barriers to accessing goods, services, facilities, and employment. With an aging population, the demand for accessible services will increase. Proactive planning is essential to ensure Cambridge remains a city where all residents, employees, and visitors can thrive.

The City's first Multi-Year Accessibility Plan laid the foundation for improving accessibility across municipal services and facilities. However, challenges such as staff turnover, the impacts of COVID-19, and other organizational changes led to gaps in implementation. This presents an important opportunity for Council to reaffirm its commitment to accessibility, ensure compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), and strengthen a culture of inclusion.

Adopting the 2024–2028 MYAP as presented would provide a clear and structured roadmap for accessibility initiatives, showcase Council's leadership, and set measurable objectives to track progress. This approach will require staff resources to implement and may involve adjustments to departmental workplans. If approved, the plan would be implemented immediately, with annual reporting and review cycles to monitor outcomes. Progress would be measured through annual accessibility reports, stakeholder feedback, and compliance audits. Departments may need to adjust resources to support the new initiatives outlined in the plan.

Community expectations for accessible services and facilities are growing, and postponing action may harm the City's reputation and weaken public trust. There is also a risk of non-compliance with the AODA and emerging accessibility standards, which could result in financial implications. Furthermore, as stakeholders increasingly expect transparent reporting and accountability, delays could undermine confidence in the City's ongoing commitment to accessibility.

If the plan is approved, the EDIA team, supported by the Accessibility Coordinator, will work collaboratively with staff across the organization to integrate accessibility into City services, programs, and operations, applying both an accessibility and an inclusion lens. While the Accessibility Coordinator will oversee corporate compliance and monitor

progress on the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, departmental and divisional staff remain accountable for ensuring accessibility within their respective service areas.

The progress of the Plan will be tracked and reported through multiple channels and shared with the Council on an annual basis. Annual updates will be published on the City's webpage to keep the community informed. In addition, staff will continue to meet the City's statutory obligations by completing provincial compliance reports every two years. This approach promotes accountability, transparency, and continuous improvement in advancing accessibility across the City of Cambridge.

EXISTING POLICY / BY-LAW(S):

Legislation and policy frameworks guiding the plan include:

- City of Cambridge Accessibility Policy
- Ontario Human Rights Code (OHRC)
- Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), 2005
- Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR), Ontario Regulation 191/11
- Facility Accessibility Design Standards (FADS)
- Ontario Building Code (OBC)

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

There are no immediate financial impacts associated with the approval of this plan. Any future resource requirements to support accessibility compliance and implementation of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan will be considered through the City's annual budget process.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE INPUT:

The MYAP was developed with guidance and input from the AAC. Work on the plan was first started in 2022, when a draft was shared with the committee. This early involvement was important as it laid the groundwork for the plan, making sure accessibility priorities were identified early and that there was ongoing collaboration with the committee. The plan was then brought back to AAC in 2025 for further review before final public consultations, where members offered additional feedback and suggestions that strengthened the final version and ensured it reflected the community's needs. To ensure broad community input, the City also hosted public consultations with residents, community groups, and stakeholders. A summary of engagement findings was published in August 2025 and presented to the AAC at its September meeting. This allowed the committee to review both the consultation results and the incorporation of community perspectives into the final Plan.

The City benefits from the AAC's insights, expertise, and lived experiences. Their ongoing involvement helps ensure that the MYAP remains responsive, adaptable, and reflective of the needs of people with disabilities in Cambridge. The AAC continues to play an essential role in advancing accessibility and fostering across the City.

INTERNAL / EXTERNAL CONSULTATION:

Community engagement was central in developing the 2024–2028 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. Staff collaborated across departments and with community stakeholders to ensure the Plan reflects the diverse needs of residents and employees.

The engagement process included an online public survey, targeted consultations with AAC, community partners, and residents. The survey was open from June 16, 2025, to July 25, 2025, and received over 140 contributions. Feedback from participants identified key accessibility priorities and concerns, which are summarized in the “What We Heard” section of this Plan.

In addition to the online survey, in-person engagement sessions were held at multiple locations across Cambridge, including:

- Allen Reuter Centre
- Cambridge Centre (two sessions)
- Langs Community Centre
- Buddy League
- David Durward Centre
- Ted Wake Centre
- YMCA

These sessions created space for meaningful dialogue and provided residents with opportunities to share lived experiences and practical recommendations. This inclusive consultation process helped shape a Plan that is responsive, community-driven, and aligned with the City's commitment to accessibility and inclusion.

The City acknowledges the contributions of staff, residents, and community partners whose input and collaboration were vital in shaping this Plan and advancing a more inclusive and accessible community.

CONCLUSION:

Staff are pleased to present the final 2024–2028 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, which incorporates valuable input received from the AAC, City staff, and community members. This Plan builds on the ongoing dedication and hard work of staff, reinforcing Cambridge's commitment to fostering a more accessible and inclusive community.

Following Council approval, the Plan will be published in an accessible format on the City's website, ensuring it is readily available to all residents, visitors, and stakeholders.

The City of Cambridge remains committed to identifying, removing, and preventing barriers for people with disabilities who live, work, or visit the city. By providing accessible services, programs, facilities, and public spaces, the city upholds the dignity, diversity, and inclusion of all individuals while continuing to meet its obligations under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).

As municipalities move from a compliance-focused approach to one that integrates compliance and inclusion, Cambridge is evolving beyond a "checkbox" model to implement and measure accessibility in meaningful ways. Accessibility is a shared responsibility, requiring strong governance, leadership, and collaboration to realize the City's long-term vision, strategic priorities, and ongoing compliance efforts. This approach ensures the City not only fulfils statutory requirements but also connects accessibility initiatives directly to broader inclusion goals, enabling all residents to participate in community life actively.

REPORT IMPACTS:

Agreement: **No**

By-law: **No**

Budget Amendment: **No**

Policy: **No**

APPROVALS:

This report has gone through the appropriate workflow and has been reviewed and or approved by the following, as required:

Director

General Manager

Chief Financial Officer

City Solicitor

City Manager

ATTACHMENTS:

When naming attachments, please use the following format:

1. 25-041-CRS Appendix A – City of Cambridge 2024-2028 Multi-Year Accessibility
2. 25-041-CRS Appendix B – MYAP Summary Survey Responses (What We Heard)
3. 25-041-CRS Appendix C – City of Cambridge Multi-Year Accessibility Plan Status Report (2024 & 2025)