

City of Cambridge Multi-Year Accessibility Plan Status Report (2024 & 2025)

September 2025

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Introduction

Under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA), municipalities are required to prepare annual status reports that outline progress in implementing their Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP). The MYAP sets out the actions and steps the City

will take to remove barriers, demonstrate accountability, and continue advancing toward the vision of a barrier-free community.

The **City of Cambridge's 2024–2028 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan** has been developed through best practice research and shaped by meaningful consultation with the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC), City staff, residents, people with lived experience of disability, and other community stakeholders. The plan reflects the voices of the community in setting its priorities.

The City's Accessibility Policy and related procedures, the Diversity, Accessibility and Inclusion Action Plan, and Facility Accessibility Design Standards all work together to reinforce the City's commitment to embed accessibility into its culture and business practices and to go above and beyond the legislated requirements of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA). This work is a shared responsibility with goals and actions to further the City's EDIA efforts and enhance belonging.

This report is organized around the five key standards outlined in the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR), along with the general requirements of the AODA.

The five standards are:

- Information and Communications
- Employment
- Design of Public Spaces
- Transportation
- Customer Service

This 2024-2025 status report highlights the City's progress and ongoing commitment to creating an accessible and inclusive community for all residents and visitors, as reflected in these standards, which encompass both City-wide initiatives and the valuable contributions of the Cambridge Accessibility Advisory Committee (CAAC).

The City is committed to transparency and ongoing community collaboration, ensuring our efforts align with the Strategic Plan. As a fast-growing municipality, we will regularly review the MYAP to keep it relevant and focused on meaningful accessibility improvements and ensure our efforts lead to measurable outcomes.

General Progress Highlights

- The Cambridge Accessibility Advisory Committee (CAAC) has played a central role in shaping municipal projects. Between 2022 and 2024, the CAAC reviewed more than 70 projects and items, and an additional 38 up to September 2025.

These included major capital projects, where the committee's recommendations directly influenced accessibility outcomes across City facilities, parks, and infrastructure.

- The City launched a **comprehensive accessibility review** of City Hall, older fire stations, and the Bishop Operations Centre, resulting in action plans to address barriers in these legacy buildings.
- **National AccessAbility Week (NAAW)** has become a cornerstone of awareness and engagement in Cambridge. In 2024 and 2025, the City marked NAAW with staff-wide events, fundraising, and guest speakers. In 2025, Cambridge partnered with Kitchener and Waterloo to participate in the region's first large-scale **Accessibility Tradeshow** at Rim Park. The City also co-hosted a regional **NAAW Book Club**, featuring "Demystifying Disability" by Emily Ladau, which included four sessions—three virtual and one in-person panel — that brought staff, residents, and advocates together for meaningful dialogue.
- Inclusive seasonal programming also expanded with **Sensitive Santa**, the distribution of free **Treat Accessibly lawn signs**, and the introduction of **plain-language visual aids** to support barrier-free participation in holiday activities.
- In May 2025, the Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility team led the **AccessNow MapMission** event, a collaborative initiative with AccessNow, Regional Tourism Organization 4, Explore Waterloo Region, and the City of Waterloo. This innovative, user-focused project introduced interactive accessibility mapping to Cambridge, enabling the identification and promotion of accessible spaces throughout the community.

Information and Communications

- In 2024, the City relaunched its **Activities Guide** in an accessible digital format for the first time since 2020. The guide was designed with screen reader compatibility, scalable text, and clear navigation.
- Staff worked with the **Electronic Document Management (EDM)** team to ensure newsletters, reports, and publications met AODA standards, including alt text, proper heading structure, and screen-reader compatibility. Mandatory PDFs posted to the City's website were reviewed for accessibility, and social media images were supported with alternative text.
- The Communications department partnered with an external website provider to **enhance and migrate content to a new website**, improving usability and ensuring stronger compliance with AODA standards for residents, including those using assistive technologies.
- A **new public notice template** was also piloted, featuring plain language, QR codes, and accessible colour-coded formatting. In addition, department-wide

AODA training was launched to improve accessibility on accessible documents, print, web, and signage was also initiated.

- The City introduced **Accessible Documents training** through the Learning Management System. Offered at beginner, intermediate, and advanced levels, this training ensures staff across all departments are equipped with the skills to create accessible materials.

Employment

- The City continues to strengthen **accessibility in employment practices**. AODA-compliant onboarding and inclusive hiring practices were embedded across all departments, with job postings now clearly stating that accommodations are available at every stage of the recruitment process.
- The City completed **Staff Diversity and Engagement Surveys** in 2022 and 2025, assessing equity, belonging, accessibility, and accommodation practices. The findings continue to inform Human Resources policy reviews through an equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility (EDIA) lens.
- New employees receive training on **rights and responsibilities** under the AODA, the Ontario Human Rights Code, and City accessibility policies. Since 2023, Cambridge Fire Services has also introduced inclusive programming for both staff and community.
- The City created a Quiet room in its facilities, offering a private space for rest or religious observance.
- In addition, **Individualized Accommodation Plans** and return-to-work processes remain in place to ensure employees with disabilities receive appropriate and timely support.

Design of Public Spaces (Built Environment)

- The **2024 Facility Accessibility Design Standards (FADS)** guided the design of all new and redeveloped municipal infrastructure. Major projects included the redesign of the **Ed Newland Pool beach entry**, upgrades to entrances, and the addition of new accessibility features at the Preston Memorial Auditorium expansion and the Cambridge Recreation Complex, collectively projected to serve approximately 1.7 million visits annually.
- The City developed a comprehensive **Parks Master Plan** with accessibility as a core focus. This plan was shaped through input and consultation from AAC, the general public, including individuals with disabilities, the accessibility coordinator and the EDIA team. The plan was thoroughly assessed by the team and was updated based on feedback from the community and Recreation staff.

- A grant application was submitted to the Ministry of Seniors and Accessibility for the "**Hearing Loop**" project, aimed at improving experiences for seniors and individuals with hearing difficulties.
- The **Cambridge Accessibility Advisory Committee (CAAC)** played a key role in providing input on public standards and reviewing site plans, operational projects, and public-facing service areas to ensure accessibility considerations were integrated early in project design.
- The CAAC remained engaged in reviewing site plans, operational projects, and public-facing service areas, ensuring accessibility considerations were integrated into early project design.
- Accessibility enhancements were completed across all five **Cambridge Public Library branches**, including automated doors, barrier-free layouts, accessible washrooms, and elevators.
- Sidewalk and trail upgrades continued with accessible surfacing, curb cuts, and signage. Streetscape improvements were made to Dunbar Road and Franklin Boulevard in partnership with the Ministry of Transportation.
- Since January 2025, accessibility walkthroughs at key City facilities led by Facilities and Emergency Preparedness staff have assessed accessibility and safety. Upgrades at City Hall are already underway, with short- and long-term enhancements planned, including the addition of evacuation chairs for safe egress.
- The City remains committed to best practices in accessibility. Learning from the City of Kingston's accessibility site plan checklists, the EDIA team has partnered with IT to convert these into user-friendly, accessible electronic forms. Started in mid-2025, this initiative is ongoing and aims to improve both the speed and quality of site plan reviews.
- As part of a city-wide initiative, the Transportation team began reviewing municipally operated surface parking lots, assessing exterior lighting, the location and design of accessible parking spaces, and their proximity to payment devices and pedestrian pathways. Usage patterns of accessible spaces are being monitored to assess demand, and FADS standards are being applied to identify necessary upgrades.

Transportation

- The City advanced accessible mobility through infrastructure improvements. In 2024, new sidewalks and pedestrian crossings were constructed, including the completion of a significant underpass at Beverly Street.

- Speed limits were lowered in several zones to enhance pedestrian and cyclist safety. New curb ramps with tactile warning indicators were installed, and multi-use trail systems were expanded with accessible surfacing.
- Cambridge also coordinated with **Grand River Transit** and the Region of Waterloo to ensure accessible municipal connections to regional transit. Winter sidewalk clearing and response to accessibility requests were prioritized.
- A significant milestone was achieved in securing \$4.4 million in infrastructure funding through the Provincial Building Faster Fund in 2024, which will support accessible pathways, safer intersections, and improved public spaces.
- AAC made recommendations for the Region’s Business Plan to enhance transit in Cambridge and beyond.
- In 2024, with the support and approval of the council, the City launched the Winter Sidewalk Clearing Program to support qualifying residents with physical and financial limitations by assisting with winter sidewalk maintenance.

Customer Service

- Customer service delivery has advanced through digital accessibility improvements, including the online digitization of the **Personal Assistance Leisure (PAL) Card application**, allowing residents to apply or renew their cards easily.
- The City enhanced the **Sensitive Santa program** in 2024 with sensory-friendly adaptations, welcoming 81 families and 163 children. The WithoutWalls (WOW) phone-based program continued to provide social and recreational opportunities for residents with limited mobility.
- The Cambridge Accessibility Advisory Committee (CAAC) provided direct feedback on signage, facilities, and communication supports to ensure inclusive experiences.
- Through the “**Accommodations Available**” **swim lesson model**, more than 7,125 participants received individualized supports, making recreation programs more inclusive. Specialized leadership programs were introduced to encourage participation from youth with disabilities.
- In 2025, the EDIA team initiated a project to strengthen accessibility within the site plan review process. Building on best practices from municipalities such as Kingston, the project introduces checklists to increase accuracy and efficiency. In collaboration with the IT Department, accessible online forms are being developed to replace traditional formats. These tools will be integrated with the Planning Department to enhance compliance with accessibility standards and improve service delivery.

Training

- In 2025, the City of Cambridge continued to offer the “**Working Towards a Barrier-Free Community**” training, reinforcing our ongoing commitment to accessibility. We also introduced a new “**Accessible Documents Training**” module through the Learning Management System (LMS). Developed by accessibility and AODA compliance experts, this training equips staff with the skills to create documents that are accessible to everyone, including individuals with disabilities. Offered at Beginner, Intermediate, and Advanced levels, the course supports staff at all stages of learning and ensures both internal and public-facing communications are inclusive and barrier-free, embedding accessibility into daily work and fostering a culture of inclusion.
- The City is also collaborating with external accessibility experts to build a long-term, sustainable pathway for accessibility awareness and capacity building. As part of this initiative, the “Disability Confident Leader” course was launched in October 2025, in recognition of Canada’s National Disability Employment Awareness Month, in partnership with the Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work (CCRW). This four-hour course provides a credential for HR professionals and organizational leaders committed to inclusive hiring and retention practices, covering disability confidence, inclusive design, accessible communication, and best practices for an inclusive workplace.

Conclusion

The City of Cambridge has made significant progress toward its 2024–2028 accessibility goals, advancing inclusive communication, embedding accessibility in hiring practices, upgrading facilities, enhancing transportation networks, and expanding barrier-free programming. The CAAC’s advice and community engagement remain central to these achievements.

Throughout 2025, City staff will continue to engage AAC members and residents, particularly those who identify as having a disability, to gather feedback and identify opportunities to improve accessibility across City goods, services, and facilities.

While progress has been made, areas for further improvement remain. Establishing a dedicated accessibility budget line, completing city-wide pedestrian mapping, advancing playground and fire station upgrades, and developing a centralized accessible format request system will build on current successes and further enhance accessibility across the community.

By continuing accessibility walkthroughs, expanding staff training, and deepening partnerships with community organizations, the City reaffirms its commitment to strengthening equity and accessibility in all programs and services. Together, these efforts support the City's vision of a barrier-free Cambridge, where every resident and visitor can participate fully, equitably, and with dignity.

City staff would like to recognize the valuable contributions of AAC members for their guidance and feedback on a wide range of projects.

Information about accessibility in the City of Cambridge, including the 2024–2028 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and Annual Status Reports, is available on the City's website. If you require hard copies or alternative formats, please make a request by emailing accessibility@cambridge.ca or calling **(519) 513-7076**.