

City of Owen Sound Annual Status Report – 2025

The City of Owen Sound has established a [Multi-Year Accessibility Plan](#) to prevent and remove barriers to accessibility and to meet requirements under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA) and the Integrated Accessibility Standards.

This Annual Status Report details the required annual update for 2025 on the progress of measures taken to improve accessibility. The purpose of this report is to track our organization's progress and make the public aware of our initiatives.

This report is available online at www.owensound.ca/accessibility.

To request an alternate format of this annual status report, please contact:

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Accessibility Accomplishments in 2025:

General Requirements

The General Requirements are those regulatory requirements that apply across all four standards in this regulation: Information and Communications, Employment, Transportation, and Design of Public Spaces. The City of Owen Sound is committed to developing, implementing, and maintaining policies governing how we achieve or will achieve accessibility through meeting our requirements under the accessibility standards referred to in this Regulation.

Accomplishments:

- Reviewed the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan in preparation of the Annual Status Report which will be posted on the City's website.
- Approved a new Strategic Plan which contains six (6) key principles, including Accessibility. The City strives to be physically, socially and financially accessible so that everyone has opportunities to connect, contribute and thrive.

- Approved Urban Design Directions which emphasize universal and age-friendly design principles. Accessibility is integrated across multiple sections, with a focus on barrier-free environments, inclusive public spaces, and safe pedestrian movement.
- The City's Official Plan has a goal to be a welcoming, safe and supportive community that provides for the diverse needs of all residents and visitors and has an objective to provide a safe and accessible urban environment with a mix of uses, activities, experiences and opportunities, for persons of all abilities in accordance with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* and the City's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and Transit Accessibility Plan.
- Continued to incorporate accessibility features into our procurement or acquisition of goods, services or facilities wherever practicable.
- Continued to train all new staff and volunteers on the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) as it pertains to people with disabilities.

Customer Service

The City continues to meet the requirements of the Accessible Customer Service Standard and continues to seek and implement best practices in delivering programs and services in an inclusive and accessible manner.

Accomplishments:

- Continued to comply with the requirements of the Customer Service Standard, including training all new staff.
- Continued to review customer feedback and take appropriate action.
- A new accessible customer service counter was installed at the City's Tourism Service complimenting a fully accessible entrance upgrade and new elevator.
- The method of voting for the 2026 municipal and school board election will be internet and telephone which is the most accessible voting method available.

Information and Communications

The Information and Communications Standard outlines requirements for organizations to create, provide, and receive information and communications in ways that are accessible for people with disabilities. This should help people with disabilities access sources of information and communications that many of us rely on every day.

The City is committed to ensuring information and communications are available and accessible to people with disabilities.

Accomplishments:

- A statement is included on the City's website, and online forms as applicable, informing users that documents are available in an alternate format upon request.
- Continued to ensure that content on the City's website and any documents created by City staff are accessible.
- Continued to offer a variety of public engagement methods to provide accessible ways for residents to share their voice and information with the City.
- Continued to provide accessible formats and communication supports, upon request.
- Increased the delivery of online services, allowing individuals to complete items such as dog license renewals without having to travel to City Hall.

Employment

The City is committed to inclusive and accessible employment practices that ensure the processes of recruiting, hiring, communicating with, and retaining employees who have disabilities is inclusive.

Accomplishments:

- Continued to review Individual Accommodation Plans and follow up with employees and managers as applicable.
- Continued to provide all new staff with AODA training.

- Reviewed hiring process with an accessibility lens, and ability to accommodate candidates during the recruitment and selection process as needs were identified.

Transportation

The Transportation Standard outlines requirements for accessible transportation services to assist people with disabilities in being able to live, work, and participate in their communities. It does not only assist persons with disabilities living in Ontario, but also visitors, families with strollers, and seniors.

The City is currently under contract to a third party for the provision of its conventional and specialized transportation services.

Accomplishments:

- Continued to ensure that the City's third-party contractor is following all of the requirements under the Transportation Standard.
- Offered transit and specialized transit six (6) days a week on a 30-minute service throughout the City. The system has accessible transit stops and shelters and includes signage and QR codes respecting bus times.
- Transit riders have access to the Transit app, which includes features such as screen reader support and allows users to customize trip planning preferences, including step-free and accessible route options where available. Additional accessibility settings can be configured within the app to better meet individual needs.

Design of Public Spaces

The Design of Public Spaces Standard focuses on outdoor spaces including recreational trails, beach access routes, outdoor public use eating areas, outdoor play spaces, exterior paths of travel, and on and off-street parking.

The City is committed to identifying, removing, and preventing barriers in public buildings and spaces by making sure that new construction and major changes to existing features do not create any new barriers.

Accomplishments:

- The 2025/26 new City Official Plan was read with an accessibility lens to ensure AODA compliance and design of the public realm for persons of all abilities.
- Staff reviewed all development proposals with an accessibility lens.
- Replaced the Owen Heights and Comm-R-Ette playgrounds with new accessible playgrounds including accessible paths of travel and seating areas and accessible play features.
- Installed new accessible benches within several parks, open spaces, and along the waterfront trail to replace older benches.
- Completed accessible trail surface upgrades to the Harrison Park Mile Drive Trail – widened sections to achieve a consistent 3 metre finished trail surface width, and improvements to the grading and drainage.
- Installed accessible crosswalks in the River District along 2nd Avenue East.
- Included an accessible path of travel and added a new accessible parking stall at the Public Works facility to ensure site plan code compliance during the Water Distribution storage building project.
- Approved and initiated the comprehensive modernization of the Farmer's Market public washrooms to replace end-of-life components, improve downtown facility access, and integrate enhanced accessibility features and smart-access technologies.
- The City approved \$20,000 in Accessibility Improvement Grants under the City's Community Improvement Plan. The grants support the installation of an accessible washroom, rear entrance accessible push buttons and ramp at 1047 2nd Avenue East (Topper's Pizza), and an accessible entrance at 369 8th Street East (the Reach Centre).
- Upgraded two intersections with Accessible Pedestrian Signals (APS), completed another in early 2026, and one more is scheduled for later this year. These push buttons are designed considering AODA needs, including locator tone, audio feedback and button vibration feedback.
- The City aims to transition additional intersections to APS in the coming years.

- Upgraded a number of benches and the concrete area adjacent to the public benches to ensure accessibility and an accessible seating area adjacent to the bench.
- Upgraded multiple intersection corners to have depressed curbs and Tactile warning surface indicators (TWSI) to facilitate wheelchair accessibility.

Summary of Consultations

The City of Owen Sound consulted with the Grey County County Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee on a number of initiatives in 2025, including:

- All Site Plan Approval and Subdivision applications that involved matters of accessibility, which included 15 items in 2025.
- Playground designs for the Comm R Ette and Owen Heights Playgrounds.
- 9th Avenue East at 6th Street East Road and Sidewalk Reconstruction.

Next Steps

Throughout 2026, the City of Owen Sound will continue to work towards meeting and maintaining its obligations under AODA and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation, and will be undertaking the following initiatives:

- Staff will continue to apply the Accessibility Checklist relating to site plan approvals and report these to the Grey County Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee;
- Continue to provide Council and Committee agendas using eScribe. This provides for the utilization of common software for all reports, agendas, and minutes with a dedicated portal for access to agenda items. The portal will provide an easily accessible manner for Council, Committee members, staff, and the public to find and view any relevant items, all of which will be in an accessible format.
- Continue to replace playgrounds in the City with upgraded accessible play spaces, ensuring that the playground and the pedestrian connections are accessible.

- Present the Municipal Election Accessibility Plan to the Grey County Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee.
- Present infrastructure construction projects to the Grey County Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee for feedback, including the 16th Street East Pedestrian Tunnel Rehabilitation and 4th Avenue West Reconstruction.
- Replace the failed Weaver's Creek Boardwalk with a new more accessible trail and boardwalk.
- Replace the Kelso Beach at Nawash Park Playground with a new, accessible playground with pedestrian connections and bench seating areas.
- Install an accessible Commemorative Forest Monument at the Bayshore Community Centre.
- Implement accessibility upgrades to the Farmers' Market Washroom in the River District.
- Implement an updated Patio Permit By-law, which was passed by Owen Sound City Council on April 27, 2026, to ensure that universal accessibility, public safety, and the streetscape experience are enhanced and not negatively impacted by the introduction of a patio on City lands (for example, on the sidewalk).
- Continue to offer an Accessibility Improvement Grant under the Community Improvement Plan to support exterior and interior accessibility improvements to eligible building and property owners.
- Continue to consult with the Grey County Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee on capital projects within the right-of-way and in parks.
- Implement accessibility upgrades to the Chapel at Greenwood Cemetery.