**Township of West Lincoln**

# Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

2027—2031

## Background: Accessibility and the Province of Ontario

Under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, Ontario Regulation 191/11 (Integrated Accessibility Standard) public and private sector organizations in the Province of Ontario must develop a multi-year accessibility plan to identify and address barriers to information and communication, employment, transportation, design of public spaces and customer service for people with disabilities.

The Township of West Lincoln is continuing its proactive approach to accessibility planning by developing its Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP) for 2027-2031. The Plan includes a public engagement process and includes consultation with its Accessibility Advisory Committee and staff. West Lincoln remains committed to meeting the accessibility needs of its citizens and staff.

This Plan identifies the steps West Lincoln has taken and will continue to take to ensure the Township's goods and services are accessible to all people of all abilities. The Township of West Lincoln is committed to providing excellent customer service to all its citizens.

West Lincoln is committed to compliance with AODA and its accessibility standards and will provide accessibility and accommodation for persons with disabilities through AODA's customer service standard, integrated accessibility standard and all other standards as they are developed, and in accordance with the requirements of the Ontario Human Rights Code.

West Lincoln wishes to thank its community partners, stakeholders and service partners in helping the township to achieve its accessibility goals.

## Message from the Mayor

As Mayor of the Township of West Lincoln, I am pleased to present our 2027-2031 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.

Accessibility is fundamental to creating an inclusive, welcoming and vibrant community where all residents can participate fully in daily life. The Township is committed to identifying, preventing and removing barriers that may impact people with disabilities. Through ongoing collaboration with the Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee, community partners, residents and staff, we continue to build a municipality that values equity, dignity, independence and opportunity for everyone.

This Plan outlines the actions we will take over the next five years to improve accessibility across municipal services, facilities, information, communications, employment practices, customer service and public spaces. It reflects both legislative requirements under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and our broader commitment to fostering a community that is accessible by design.

I would like to thank everyone who contributed their feedback, experiences and expertise during the development of this Plan. Your input has helped identify priorities and shape a roadmap that will guide our accessibility efforts into the future.

Together, we will continue to make West Lincoln a community where all residents and visitors can access services, participate in programs and enjoy public spaces with confidence and dignity.

Mayor Cheryl Ganann

## Message from the CAO

The Township of West Lincoln is committed to delivering accessible services and ensuring that accessibility considerations are integrated into all aspects of municipal operations.

Our 2027-2031 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan provides a clear framework for advancing accessibility throughout the organization. The Plan builds upon the progress already achieved and identifies new opportunities to improve customer service, communications, facilities, employment practices, public spaces and community engagement.

Accessibility is a shared responsibility. Through ongoing staff training, policy review, infrastructure improvements and consultation with people with disabilities, we will continue working to remove barriers and create inclusive experiences for residents, employees and visitors. The goals outlined in this Plan reflect feedback received through public and staff consultation, as well as the valuable guidance of the Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee.

As Chief Administrative Officer, I am proud of the Township's commitment to continuous improvement and the dedication of staff who work every day to support an accessible and inclusive community. We recognize that accessibility is an ongoing journey, and we remain committed to ensuring our programs, services and facilities are responsive to the diverse needs of our community.

On behalf of the Township Administration, I thank everyone who contributed to the development of this Plan and look forward to working together to achieve its goals.

Truper McBride, Chief Administrative Officer

## General Requirements

General Requirements under the AODA include the establishment of accessibility policies, the accessibility plan and addresses needs related to accessible procurement. This section of the AODA also communicates training requirements for greater understanding of the AODA and accessibility needs of clients and customers.

### What We Will Continue to Do

- Prepare and share publicly our Multi-Year Accessibility Plan outlining our commitment to accessible goods and services for citizens within the Township of West Lincoln.

### 2027-2031 Goals

- Provide strong municipal guidance, direction and ownership to ensure accessibility is captured within the parameters of the Township's business.
- Review accessibility policy, procurement policies and other related policies to ensure accessibility needs are addressed adequately.
- Provide annual updates on the implementation progress of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.
- Support the development of the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) by reviewing the recruitment process to strengthen representation of a variety of disability experiences at the committee table.
- Provide immediate training for new hires and refresher training to existing staff and the AAC every 3 years on the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), the Ontario Human Rights Commission requirements, other Accessibility Standard requirements as necessary and the customer service experience.

- Source and provide additional training for staff on different disabilities, especially invisible disabilities such as neurodiversity, so that staff will gain a greater understanding of issues and accessibility barriers.
- Source and provide additional training for by-law enforcement officers on AODA requirements to ensure a more inclusive understanding of accessibility barriers.
- Source and provide additional training for development staff on AODA requirements and on different disabilities to ensure a more inclusive understanding of disability experiences and barriers.

## Who is Responsible

- Clerks
- Accessibility Consultant

## Customer Service

The Customer Service Standard establishes customer service policies. With the welcoming of service animals and support persons, the Standard allows for an effective customer service experience. It also addresses communication needs through the development of an accessible feedback process and the need for accessible formats for information. Staff increase their customer service effectiveness through customer service training.

### What We Will Continue to Do

- Welcome service animals and support persons on Township premises to support the accessibility needs of people with disabilities.
- Review the Customer Service Policy to ensure it is current and reflects any internal changes/updates.
- Receive public and internal feedback using multiple accessible methods to improve customer service.
- Provide alternate formats of customer service information upon request.

### 2027-2031 Goals

- Provide additional training on accessible customer service and invisible disabilities so that front line staff receive further awareness to better respond to the accessibility needs of the public. Customer service training refreshers for staff will emphasize the face-to face customer service needs.

- Improve the customer service experience by ensuring accessibility information is available through the Township's Leisure Guide or by creating an Accessibility Guide with the JAAC. The guide would be useful to the public in finding accessibility features in the township and would be helpful to staff in addressing enquiries or customer service needs with accurate, up to date information.

- Consider expanding township office service hours, particularly in parks and recreation, to increase options for people with disabilities.

- Provide an “additional support” option, that is not web-based, such as a dedicated phone line, an in-person option or a designated staff contact, to allow people with disabilities to register for programs and services without needing web-based capability.

## Who is Responsible

- Clerks
- Accessibility Consultant

## Information and Communication

The Information and Communications Standard ensures that municipal information and web-based communications are accessible and available in alternate formats upon request. It ensures that public emergency information is accessible and focuses on information available through public libraries.

### What We Will Continue to Do

- Ensure web-based information is compliant with WCAG 2.1 Accessibility Standards, to Level AA.
- Provide alternate formats of Township information upon request.
- Provide improvements to the website, especially keeping information current.
- The public library will:
    - Access to or arrange for accessible materials where they exist.
    - Provide information about the availability of accessible materials and provide this information in an accessible format upon request.
    - Provide accessible formats for archival materials, special collections, rare books and donations.

### 2027-2031 Goals

- Conduct a website audit to ensure Township website is fully compliant with WCAG 2.1, Level AA.
- Increase awareness among staff, through training, on the barriers faced by people with disabilities in using the internet.
- Source and provide training on accessible content creation and website considerations.
- Ensure that Township information is available beyond the website, including pamphlets, posters and other mailouts.

- Review how the organization communicates with and informs the public about the availability of emergency plans and policies, provides accessible materials where they exist, and provide communication support upon request.
- Source and provide resources for employees on accessible public engagement and consultation processes.
- Redesign business cards to have a larger, clear text font

## Who is Responsible

- Communications staff
- Accessibility Consultant

## Employment Standards

The Employment Standard attempts to reduce and eliminate barriers to employment for people with disabilities. It approaches accessibility throughout the employment life cycle through recruitment to redeployment. It requires the development of accommodation plans and emergency response plans for employees with disabilities. It ensures accessibility is considered in all employment related functions.

### What We Will Continue to Do

- Ensure accessibility is addressed throughout the employment life cycle from recruitment to re-deployment.
- Develop employment accommodation plans as needed for employees.
- Develop emergency response plans for employees as needed.

### 2025-2030 Goals

- Review employment letter templates to ensure the availability of accommodations is clearly stated.
- Source and provide training to Human Resources staff (e.g. managers and supervisors) on disability awareness especially invisible disabilities so that staff have more understanding of barriers faced in employment.
- Source and provide training to Human Resources staff on providing disability-related accommodations.
- The library will explore and implement how to create safer spaces (lowered lighting, reduced sound) for individuals who are neurodivergent.

## Who is Responsible

- Human Resources staff
- Senior Management staff
- Accessibility Consultant

## Transportation

The Transportation Standard examines accessibility in both conventional and specialized transit systems. It requires fare parity, accessible features on buses and requires a specific accessibility plan for transit services. The Standard also addresses accessibility in municipal taxi services.

While the transportation system is now managed by Niagara Region, West Lincoln will continue to work with the Niagara Region Transit to ensure the needs of West Lincoln citizens are met.

### What We Will Continue to Do

- Work with the Niagara Region Transit to ensure the needs of West Lincoln citizens are communicated and met to ensure good service.

### 2027-2031 Goals

- Work with the Region to improve transit access, routes, schedule and bus stops throughout the Township.

### Who is Responsible

- Clerks, Legislative staff
- Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee

## Design of Public Spaces

The Design of Public Spaces Standard reduces barriers to public spaces through specific requirements in exterior design elements, recreational trails, outdoor play spaces and accessible parking. Also considered are service counters in customer service interior and exterior areas.

### What We Will Continue to Do

- Refer to the completed Accessibility Audit of facilities to identify areas for improvement and implement recommendations from the project report.
- Work with the Accessibility Advisory Committee to review development applications and site plans to identify and prevent barriers.

### 2027-2031 Goals

- Conduct refresher Accessibility Audits to ensure barriers are being captured and addressed throughout Township facilities.
- Ensure existing accessibility features (e.g. automatic door openers) are functional and working during business hours.
- Address accessibility in the Township office washrooms (i.e. need for automatic door openers, turning radius and lighting)
- Ensure Township staff are trained in accessible built environment considerations so that private sector development addresses accessibility barriers.
- Initiate an educational campaign to address the need for appropriate snow removal.
- Conduct a survey of sidewalks to determine if barriers exist and develop a rehabilitation plan as appropriate.
- Explore installing a park that is fenced. This would reduce barriers for children with disabilities and improve safety.

- Conduct a study to determine braille and large print signage needs at township-owned facilities and areas. Install large print, braille and tactile signage as needed.
- Install adult change tables throughout facilities and especially in parks and recreation facilities.
- The library will explore and implement how to create safer spaces (lowered lighting, reduced sound) for individuals who are neurodivergent.

## Who is Responsible

- Public Works staff
- Parks and Recreation staff
- Library staff
- Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee
- Accessibility Consultant

## Conclusion

The Accessibility Plan enables the Township of West Lincoln to address accessibility issues proactively. Through the Plan, West Lincoln aims to provide accessible goods and services to all citizens. The Accessibility Standards serve as a guide for accessibility improvement initiatives and offer a framework for achieving universal access. West Lincoln looks forward to collaborating with the community to achieve accessibility.

**Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee of Lincoln, West Lincoln, Pelham, Thorold, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Grimsby and Port Colborne**

# Public and Staff Consultation Report for the Development of the

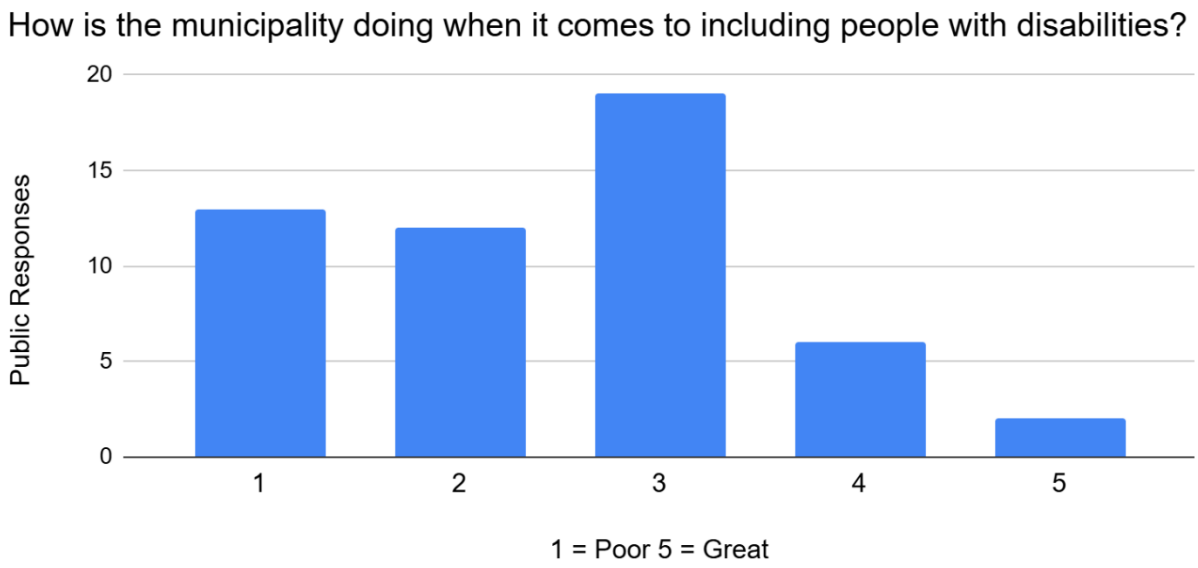
# Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2027-2031

## Background: Consultation Report for Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2027-2031

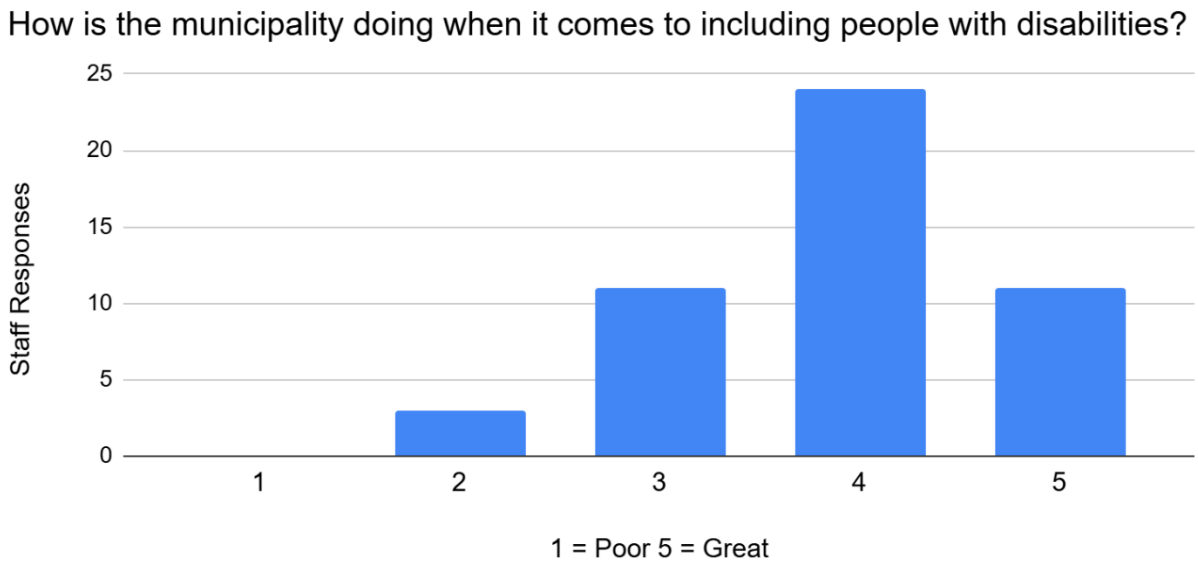
Under the AODA, when drafting its Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, the municipality is required to consult with the public and people with disabilities. This Plan was developed after this consultation process took place. Municipal staff were also consulted.

In total, we received 52 responses from the public and 49 responses from municipal staff.  The results vary greatly between these two groups, as outlined in the responses and graphs below. In general, staff perceive the accessibility efforts of the municipality as more successful than the public. However, the public included public access to businesses and private sector organizations in their responses.

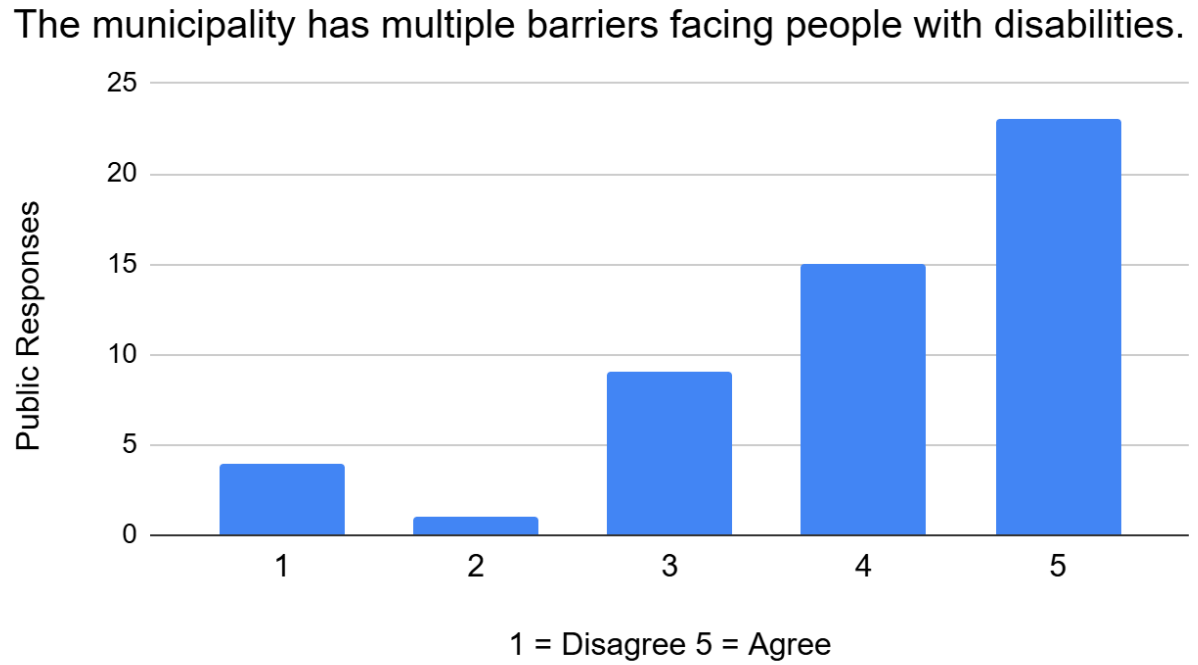
The consultation allowed for the development of trends and themes across the Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee catchment area of Lincoln, West Lincoln, Pelham, Thorold, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Grimsby and Port Colborne.

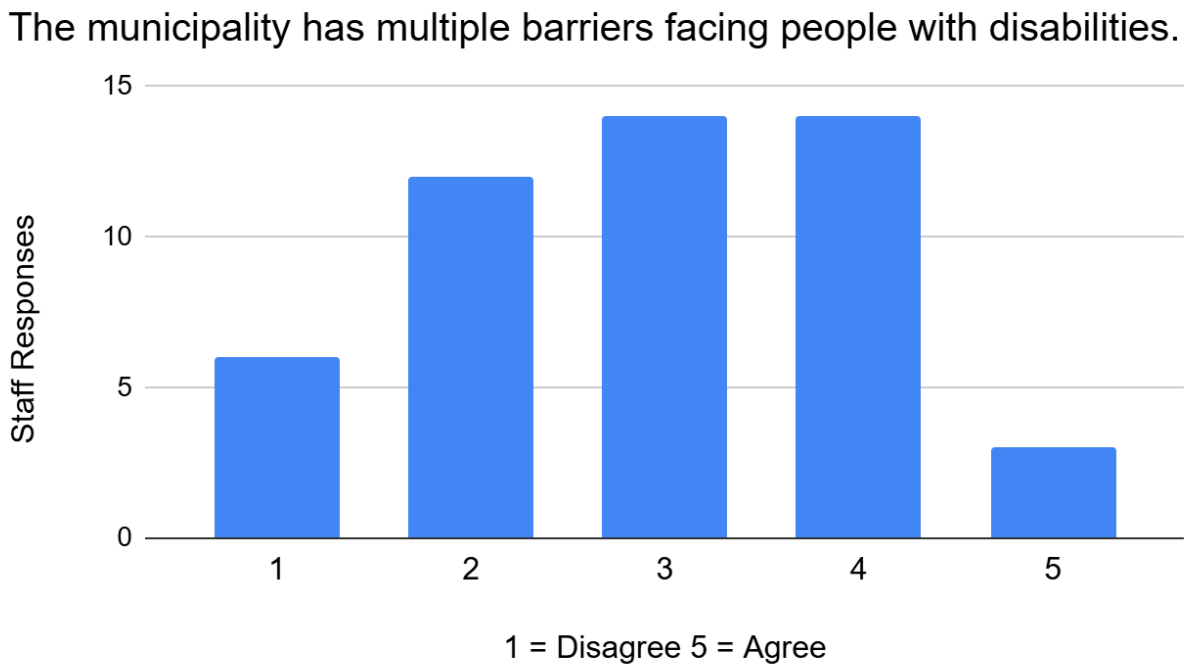



This graph shows the public's perception of the municipality's inclusion of people with disabilities as being ranked "poor" to "good". Whereas the graph below shows that staff perceive inclusion efforts as "good", "very good" or "great".



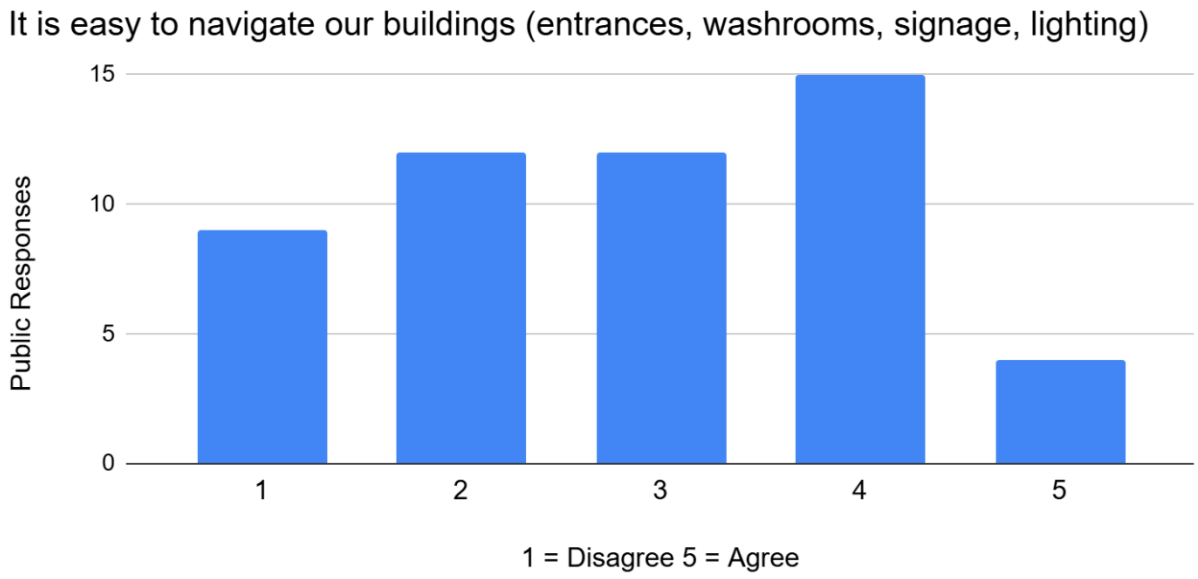

Further, the public perceives that the municipality has a large number of barriers facing people with disabilities, but staff saw less barriers as seen in the graphs below and on the next page.

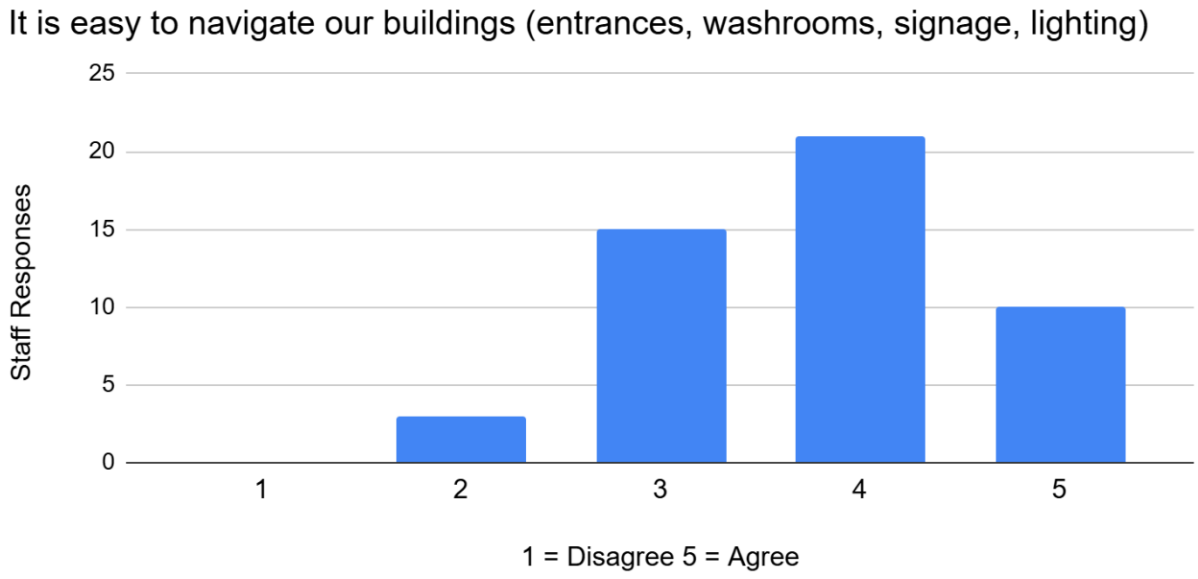





When asked what the municipality is doing well when including people with disabilities, the public cited municipal facilities, ramps and following the AODA most often. Staff mentioned building accessibility, IT accessibility and programs and services being available to people with disabilities.

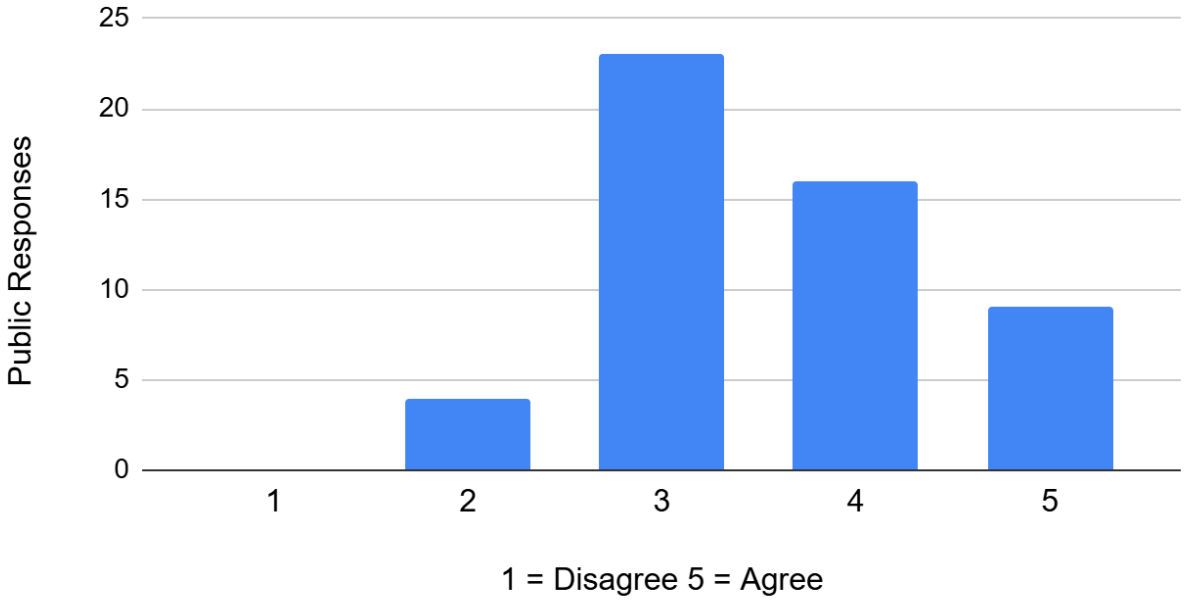
In terms of building accessibility, the graph below shows the public perceives access as greatly varied, with many stating that buildings are not easy to navigate, while others indicate that they agree that buildings are accessible. Staff, however, report they see buildings as mostly accessible. The discrepancy could be accounted for the public reporting private sector facilities in their responses



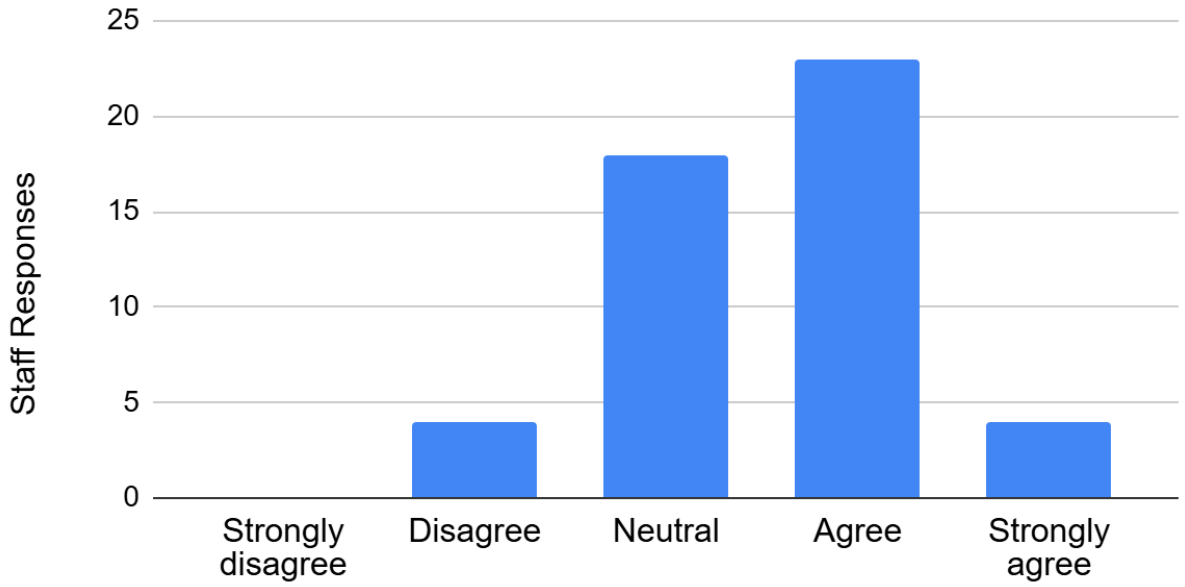

The consultation also asked about digital accessibility. The public reported they perceive digital accessibility as “good” to “great” with content clear, and easy to understand, as shown in the graph below. Staff also report strong digital access being available.

Our website, digital content, or documentation is accessible.

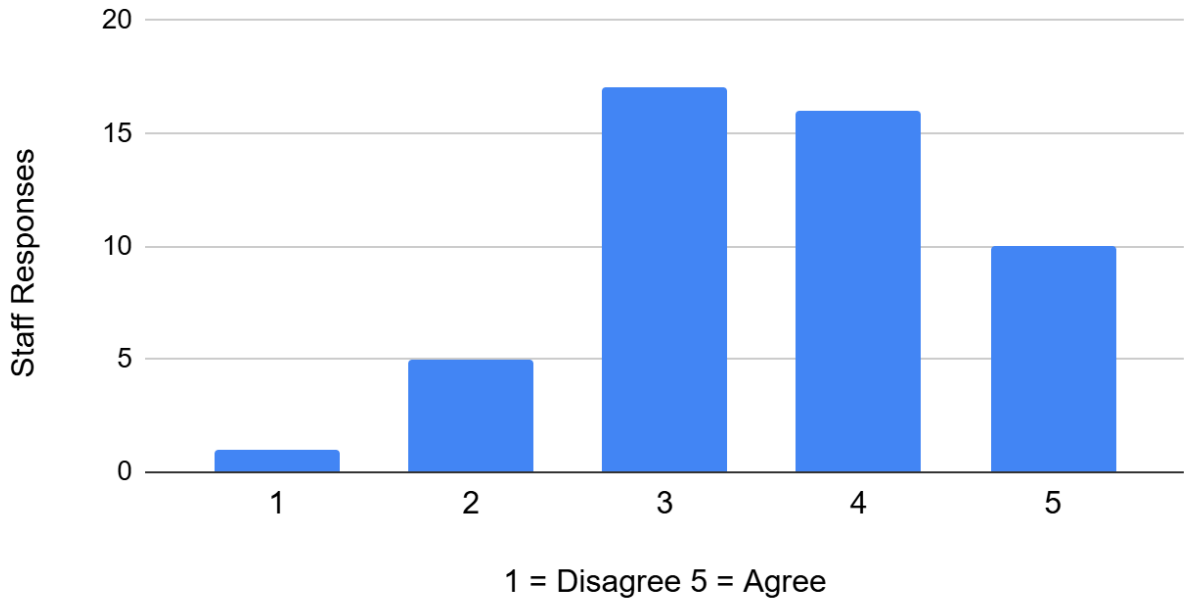



Is the content clearly written and easy to understand?

(e.g., 9th-grade reading level)

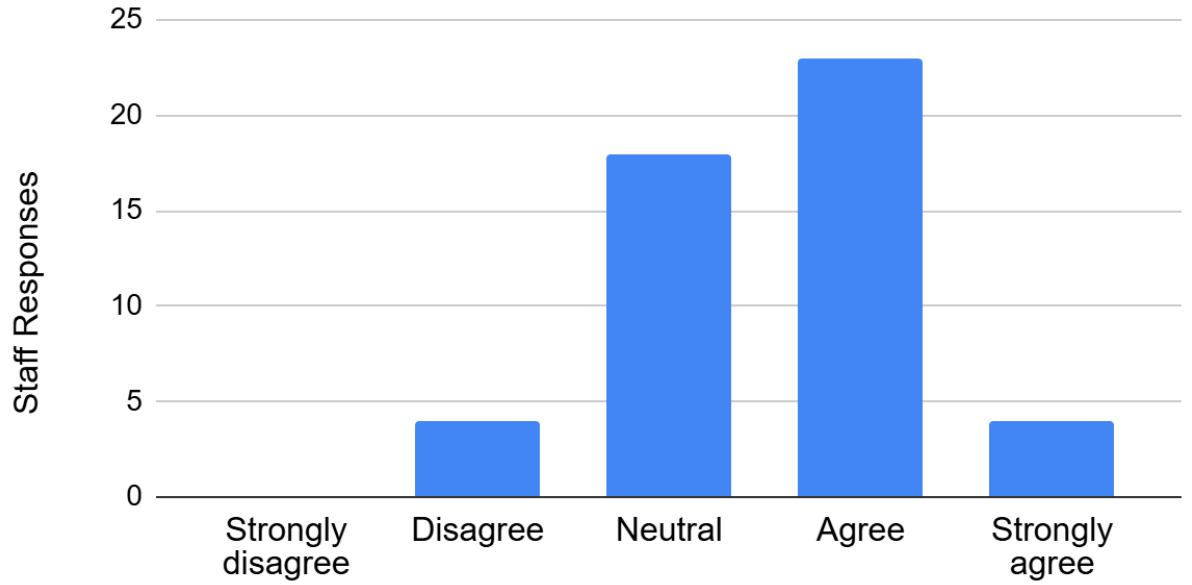


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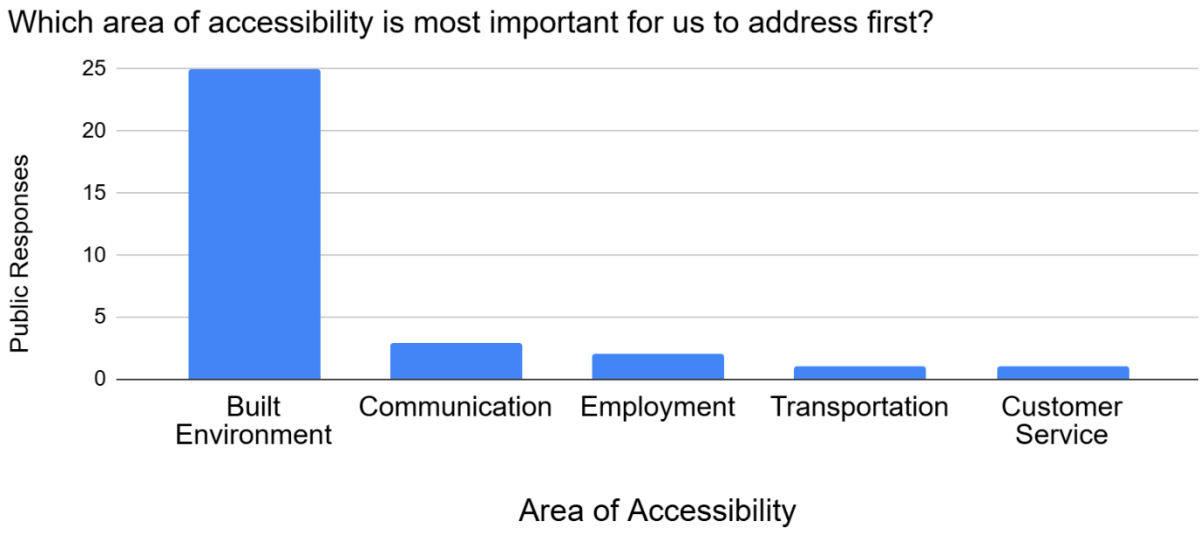
(e.g., 9th-grade reading level)



When asked about attitudinal barriers, respondents reported barriers 30.8% of the time, but 69.2% indicated there were no attitudinal barriers. Barriers reported include a lack of understanding about invisible, nonphysical disabilities and a heavy reliance of web resources creating a barrier for community seniors. Staff indicate attitudinal barriers for staff with invisible disabilities.

Suggestions for improving accessibility include better by-law enforcement, asking people with disabilities for input and guidance and improving curb cuts and sidewalk accessibility. Staff recommend enhanced training on diverse disabilities, digital accessibility and greater awareness of employee accessibility needs.

In terms of next steps, as shown in the graph below, overwhelming indicated that built environment accessibility should be the priority for the municipality.




Staff indicated a strong need for additional training in invisible disabilities, neurodivergence and AODA requirements and implementation. Both staff and the public mentioned the importance of consulting people with disabilities when developing or improving existing goods and services. Ultimately there needs to be strong municipal guidance, direction and ownership to ensure accessibility is captured

## Conclusion

The consultation findings demonstrate that, while progress has been made in areas such as municipal facilities, digital accessibility, and compliance with the AODA, important barriers remain. Differences between public and staff perceptions highlight the need to centre the lived experiences of people with disabilities when evaluating accessibility and setting priorities. The feedback identifies the built environment, by-law enforcement, accessible sidewalks and curb cuts, staff training, awareness of invisible disabilities and neurodivergence, and continued consultation as key areas for action.

These findings will inform the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan for 2027–2031 and support a coordinated municipal approach to removing barriers. Ongoing leadership, accountability, and engagement with people with disabilities will be essential to achieving meaningful and measurable improvements across the participating municipalities.