



Multi-Year Accessibility Plan: 2023-2027

Inclusive Programs, Services and Spaces for All

Contents

- Intent 3
- Statement of Commitment..... 3
- Accessibility Plan 4
 - Part 1 – General Requirements..... 4
 - Establishment of Accessibility Policies..... 4
 - Procuring or Acquiring Goods, Services, Facilities or Self-Serve Kiosks 4
 - Employee Training..... 4
 - Part 2 – Information and Communication 4
 - Feedback 4
 - Accessible Formats and Communications Supports 4
 - Accessible Websites and Web Content 5
 - Part 3 – Transportation 5
 - Part 4 – Design of Public Spaces..... 5
 - Recreation Trails and Beach Access Routes 5
 - Outdoor Public Eating Areas 5
 - Exterior Paths of Travel and Parking 5
 - Projects 6
 - Service Counters 6
 - Part 5 – Customer Service..... 6
 - Establishment of Policies..... 6
 - Disruption of Service..... 6
- Additional Initiatives 6

Intent

The intent of the 2023 to 2027 accessibility plan outlines the policies and actions that the Township of Southgate will put in place to improve opportunities for people with disabilities in accordance with the requirements communicated under the [Integrated Accessibility Standards, Ontario Regulation 191/11](#) (IASR)

Statement of Commitment

The Township of Southgate is the fastest growing community in the County of Grey, and has a rapidly growing population of varying talents, abilities, and experiences. The Township of Southgate values contributions made by all staff, residents, and visitors to enhance the multiple communities in the Township. The Township of Southgate believes in equal opportunities and diversity and is committed to providing barrier free environments that allow people to main their independence and dignity in accessing programs and services. The Township aims to prevent barriers by supporting positive approaches and attitudes toward accessibility.

The Township of Southgate upholds the requirements under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Ontario Human Rights Code and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) and the associated regulations, and strives to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities in a timely and effective manner.

The Township of Southgate has established and maintain policies, practices and procedures which are consistent with accessibility standards established under the AODA, including accessible customer service, information and communication, employment, transportation and the built environment, that support the four core principles as outlined in the AODA:

- **Dignity** – Service is provided in a way that allows persons with disabilities to maintain self respect and the respect of others
- **Full Inclusion (Independence)** – All people are allowed to do things on their own without unnecessary help or interference from others
- **Integrations** – Service is provided in a way that all persons with disabilities can benefit from the same services, in the same place, and in the same or similar way as other customers unless an alternative measure is necessary to enable persons with disabilities to access those services
- **Equal Opportunity** – Service is provided to persons with disabilities in such a way that they have an opportunity to access goods and services equal to that given to others.

Accessibility Plan

Part 1 – General Requirements

Establishment of Accessibility Policies

The Township of Southgate has established policies and will continue to review and revise these according to legislative changes and requirements. New and revised policies will be shared with and reviewed by staff, and will include confirmation that staff understand and agree to abide by the contents of the policies as an added measures of accountability.

Procuring or Acquiring Goods, Services, Facilities or Self-Serve Kiosks

The Township is continually working to incorporate accessible features, criteria, and designs as it related to accessing goods, services, and facilities.

Recent initiatives within the Township that have provided increased accessibility include:

- Developing and implementing a Municipal Election Accessibility Plan and executing it successfully in the 2022 Municipal Election.
- Relocation and redesign of the Township of Southgate Council Chambers, including installation of audio-visual streaming equipment being compliant with AODA standards.
- Renovation of the Dundalk Pool building to allow for accessible change rooms and bathrooms and providing a barrier free access.
- Replacement of the front door at the Administration Building to allow for barrier free access to the reception area.

The Township of Southgate recreation department continually strives to provide recreational programming and cultural initiatives that serve a wide audience including people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds.

Employee Training

All Township of Southgate staff and volunteers are required to complete training in accordance with accessibility regulations. Various staff and department remain actively connected with several resources that occasionally provide additional training and development opportunities related to a variety of topics. Training opportunities are shared with staff wherever possible.

Part 2 – Information and Communication

Feedback

The Township of Southgate welcomes feedback on and is open to suggestions about how to improve the accessibility of our programs and services. Feedback received will be reviewed, considered, and shared with the applicable Township of Southgate department throughout the duration of this plan.

Accessible Formats and Communications Supports

The Township of Southgate strives to provide effective and efficient service to customers through utilization of alternative formats to communicate information, or using communication supports.

Recent initiatives that have provided increased accessibility in information and communication dissemination include:

- New processes and technologies adopted to administer all Council and Committee meetings, both in person and through electronic formats, including an electronic participation policy to allow continuation of the technologies. A live, closed-captioned feed of public meetings can be attended directly, and a recording of the meeting is made available on YouTube to provide a wider opportunity for participation and information sharing to members of the public.

Accessible Websites and Web Content

Improvements on the Township of Southgate's website have been ongoing since 2020 and will continue to occur as required to allow ease of access and availability of information. Accessibility and Web Content Accessibility guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA requirements will be considered within updates to the current website content as required in accordance with implementation deadlines under the Standard.

Part 3 – Transportation

The Township of Southgate currently does not provide Township owned transportation; however the Township of Southgate will continue to work with and support the Saugeen Mobility and Regional Transit System (SMART), a local organization that provides accessible transportation throughout the County of Grey.

Part 4 – Design of Public Spaces

Recreation Trails and Beach Access Routes

When recreation trails that are owned and maintained by the Township of Southgate are constructed or redeveloped, consultation will take place regarding the slope of the trail, need for and placement of ramps, rest areas or other amenities. Consultation will take place through discussions at the County of Grey Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee (GCJAAC). Consideration will be given to all technical requirements as indicated within Regulation 80.9 of the IASR for town-owned recreation trails which are redeveloped or reconstructed.

Outdoor Public Eating Areas

Outdoor public eating areas which are constructed or redeveloped and are owned and maintained by the Township will comply with Regulations 80.16 and 80.17 under the IASR. A minimum of twenty percent (20%) of seating will be accessible to those using mobility aids by providing a firm, steady path of clearance leading to the seating and around the seating area. Any outdoor eating areas which are redeveloped or constructed during the term of this plan will be done so in accordance with IASR requirements.

Exterior Paths of Travel and Parking

The Building, Planning and Public Works Department's maintain up to date knowledge on requirements related to the design and construction or redevelopment of exterior paths of travel and parking spaces. All building and redevelopment projects to date and those which occur in the future will maintain compliance with IASR regulations and other related legislation. Site plans for developments, including exterior paths of travel and parking areas will be reviewed by the GCJAAC, where possible.

Projects

All building projects and development will be completed in accordance with the Ontario Building Code, which includes accessibility provisions.

Currently, there are no plans to extensively renovate Township owned buildings, however, smaller changes take place on an ongoing basis to increase the accessibility of Township facilities where possible. All renovations of Township owned buildings will be presented to the GCJAAC and will be consulted accordingly as the project progresses.

Service Counters

Patrons and members of the public visit Township facilities which make use of service counters and waiting areas.

Presently, the service counter at the Township of Southgate administration building includes an area for service at standing height, and at sitting height to accommodate those who require the use of mobility aids. Projects which arise throughout the term of this plan will include consideration of IASR requirements.

Part 5 – Customer Service

Establishment of Policies

The Township of Southgate is committed to developing customer service policies that respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. Any policy of the Township of Southgate that does not respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities will be modified or removed.

Disruption of Service

The Township of Southgate strives to provide customers with notice in the event of a planned or unexpected disruption in the facilities or services usually used by people with disabilities. This notice shall include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available.

Notice may be given by posting the information at a conspicuous place on premises owned or operated by the Township, by posting it on the Township of Southgate's website or by such other method as is reasonable in the circumstances.

Additional Initiatives

The Township of Southgate is committed to provide support to businesses within the community related to accessibility. The Township provides support to local qualifying businesses on an ongoing basis. Currently, the [Community Improvement Plan \(CIP\)](#) provides initiatives to promote development and revitalization projects, including assisting local businesses with accessibility improvements.