



# Town of Aurora: Mapping Recreation for Persons with Disabilities

August 2024





# Acknowledgements

The *Town of Aurora Mapping Recreation for Persons with Disabilities* was developed with the input, guidance, and experiences shared by persons with disabilities, parents and caregivers of persons with disabilities, community organizations and disability advocacy groups, as well as through discussions with members of Town Council and Staff.

We would like to acknowledge and thank the many disabled residents, as well as parents and caregivers of disabled people for sharing your time and your stories. Your experiences and insights have helped inform and guide the development of this Plan and the action that comes next.

The project team wishes to acknowledge that person-first and identity-first language are both used in the disability community. We understand that there are strong preferences based on different experiences, history, and analysis and that therefore the choice of each person with a disability/ disabled person must be respected. For the purposes of this project, we alternate between person-first and identity-first language.

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- The Abilities Centre
- Aurora Black Community
- Autistics for Autistics
- Best Buddies
- Black Deaf Canada
- Community Living Central York
- Creating Alternatives
- Deaf Blind Ontario
- Easter Seals
- Girl Guides of Canada
- Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital
- Reaching Indoor Climbing
- Spinal Cord Injury Ontario
- Regional Municipality of York
- Your Support Services Network
- Variety Village
- Learning Disabilities Association of York Simcoe





## Land Acknowledgement

The Town of Aurora acknowledges that the Anishinaabe lands on which we live and work are the traditional and treaty territory of the Chippewas of Georgina Island, as well as many other Nations whose presence here continues to this day. As the closest First Nation community to Aurora, we recognize the special relationship the Chippewas have with the lands and waters of this territory. They are the water protectors and environmental stewards of these lands, and as a municipality we join them in these responsibilities.

We further acknowledge that Aurora is part of the treaty lands of the Mississaugas and Chippewas, recognized through Treaty #13 as well as the Williams Treaties of 1923. A shared understanding of the rich cultural heritage that has existed for centuries, and how our collective past brought us to where we are today, will help us walk together into a better future.





# Table of Contents

<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	2
<b>A Recreation Plan for Persons with Disabilities</b> .....	5
<b>Purpose of the Plan</b> .....	7
<b>Approach in Developing the Plan</b> .....	8
<b>Recreation Programming in Aurora</b> .....	8
<b>Connecting to Community Priorities</b> .....	9
International .....	9
National .....	9
Provincial .....	10
Local .....	11
<b>By the Numbers</b> .....	12
<b>Community Insights</b> .....	14
<b>Community Priorities</b> .....	16
<b>Our Plan, Our Promise</b> .....	17
Building Belonging. ....	17
Guiding Principles .....	19
<b>Action!</b> .....	20
<b>Implementation Plan</b> .....	29
<b>Appendix A: Current Town Programs</b> .....	40
<b>Appendix B: Current Policy Framework</b> .....	42







## A Recreation Plan for Persons with Disabilities

The Town of Aurora is dedicated to fostering an inclusive community where everyone can enjoy and participate in recreational activities. A key action item within the Town of Aurora Parks and Recreation Master Plan (2023) is to engage under-represented populations and conduct a Recreation Needs Assessment for Persons with Disabilities. Mapping Recreation for Persons with Disabilities is an extension of that commitment and is aligned with several national and international policy frameworks advocating for the rights and inclusion of disabled people.

The Town of Aurora has a strong commitment to inclusion and this assessment understands disability as an evolving umbrella term that covers a broad range and variation of conditions, chronic illnesses, impairments, activity or participation limitations or restrictions, that may be visible or invisible, permanent, episodic, or temporary.

In Canada, a significant and growing segment of the population is disabled. Despite this, most disabled Canadians face multiple barriers to participation in recreation activities including:

- Attitudinal barriers such as stereotypes and stigma towards persons with disabilities.
- Communication barriers can occur when there is a lack of accessible communication such as captioning for videos and materials in large print.
- Physical barriers can be both the presence or the absence of what is needed in the built environment for equitable accessibility and experience.
- Policy barriers such as when accommodations are denied.
- Socio-economic barriers include economic or social conditions that limit access to opportunities such as limited resources to afford an assistive device, or lack of support.
- Programmatic barriers such as insufficient time allotted for the activity, lack of appropriate equipment and attitudes of staff.
- Informational barriers occur when information is not provided in accessible formats, making it difficult for a disabled person to obtain and/or understand necessary information.
- Cultural barriers such as societal norms and beliefs that can stigmatize someone with a disability or fail to recognize the rights of persons with disabilities.
- Transportation barriers include the lack of accessible transportation options, which can limit the ability of persons with disabilities to travel and participate in activities.



The historical exclusion and devaluing of disabled people due to ableism, a societal bias that upholds certain physical and mental characteristics as the ideal, demands a shift towards more inclusive and accessible recreation, recognizing it is a human right and essential to public health.

There are many important reasons to develop a recreation plan for persons with disabilities, among them:

1. Disabled people make up a significant percentage of the population, and disability is present across all age groups, in Aurora and, according to recent data, the rate of disability is increasing in both young and older adults.
2. Recreational participation is a fundamental right and integral to the quality of life for individuals with disabilities and the broader community.
3. Insights gathered as part of preparing this Plan outline the current state of recreational access and existing barriers to full participation among persons with disabilities living in Aurora.







## Purpose of the Plan

Mapping Recreation for Persons with Disabilities (the Plan) guides decision making with respect to recreation programming and services in the Town of Aurora over the next five years (2024-2029). This is the Town's first dedicated recreation plan for persons with disabilities.

The purpose of the Plan is to establish a comprehensive framework that ensures recreational activities are inclusive, accessible, and responsive to the needs of persons with disabilities. This Plan serves as a proactive commitment to recognizing recreation as a fundamental human right crucial for the well-being and integration of all community members.

The importance of this Plan is underscored by the growing diversity and needs within the community, which reflect a significant segment of the population living with a range of disabilities. By fostering an environment that prioritizes accessibility and inclusivity, the Plan aims not only to enhance the quality of life for persons with disabilities but also to enrich the community as a whole by promoting broader participation and engagement.

Objectives of the Plan include:

- Developing an understanding of community needs and desires with respect to participation in recreation activities
- Identifying and addressing existing barriers and gaps to participation in recreational activities
- Exploring opportunities to address community needs and eliminate barriers to participation

Through the goals and actions identified within this plan, the Town of Aurora strives to lead by example in creating a recreational environment where everyone feels welcomed, safe, and that they belong.





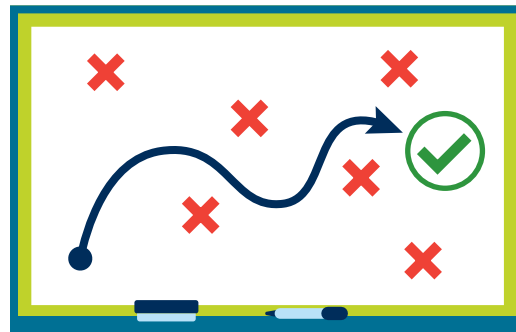
## Approach in Developing the Plan

Mapping Recreation for Persons with Disabilities was completed in two core phases. The first was the identification of recreation needs among disabled people in Aurora, and the second was the development of the goals and actions to address the identified needs and support recreational programming decision-making in the future.



### Phase 1: Identification of Needs

- Research and Engagement Plan
- Data Collection and Background Document Review
- Community Engagement and What We Are Hearing Report
- Current State Analysis



### Phase 2: Development of Recreation Plan for Persons with Disabilities

- Draft Goals and Actions
- Community Engagement
- Draft Recreation Plan for Persons with Disabilities
- Final Recreation Plan for Persons with Disabilities

## Recreation Programming in Aurora

The Town of Aurora offers a diverse range of activities across various age groups for persons with disabilities. Through programs like Inclusive Swim Lessons and Soc-Ability, individuals with disabilities are provided with specialized and tailored instruction and opportunities for social interaction and skill-building. Through different program offerings, the Town aims to foster social inclusion and enhance the well-being and quality of life of individuals with disabilities in the Aurora community.

A full listing of program offerings is provided in **Appendix A**.





## Connecting to Community Priorities

Mapping Recreation for Persons with Disabilities is guided by research, best-practices, and national and international policies and frameworks that seek to uphold the dignity of persons with disabilities by creating an inclusive and accessible society. A snapshot of these key guiding policies and frameworks are listed below.

### International

**The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) – Article 30.** The CRPD is a human rights treaty that sets out a broad range of international standards for the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities. Adopted on December 13, 2006, by the United Nations General Assembly, Article 30 of the CRPD particularly focuses on the cultural and recreational rights of individuals with disabilities. It mandates equal access to cultural life, recreation, leisure, and sports. Canada, being a State Party to the CRPD, has ratified these provisions and is thereby committed to acting in various areas, such as legislation, policy, and practice, to implement the rights protected in Article 30. This includes adjustments and provisions to ensure that cultural, recreational, and sporting facilities and services are accessible to those with disabilities.

### National

**Canadian Human Rights Charter (Section 15):** Embedded in the Constitution, the Charter protects Canadians against discrimination, ensuring equality under the law for all individuals, including those with disabilities. It allows for the creation of laws or programs to improve the conditions of disadvantaged groups.

The Canadian Human Rights Commission also monitors the extent to which Canada is implementing the CPRD. In 2020 the Commission reported that 83% of the nearly 3,000 people who participated in an online survey felt that Canada is doing a poor job protecting the rights of disabled people.<sup>1</sup>

**Accessible Canada Act (2019):** The Act has an aim to establish a barrier-free Canada by 2040, targeting federal jurisdictions to promote the dignity and inclusion of persons with disabilities. The Act involves creating accessibility standards and enforcing compliance, with a vision for full societal participation.

**Recreation Framework in Canada (2015):** The framework serves as a national guideline for public recreation providers, ensuring all Canadians have access to meaningful recreational experiences. This framework promotes the creation of supportive environments for physical and social participation and is instrumental in shaping inclusive recreation policies.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/en/monitoring-the-rights-of-people-with-disabilities>

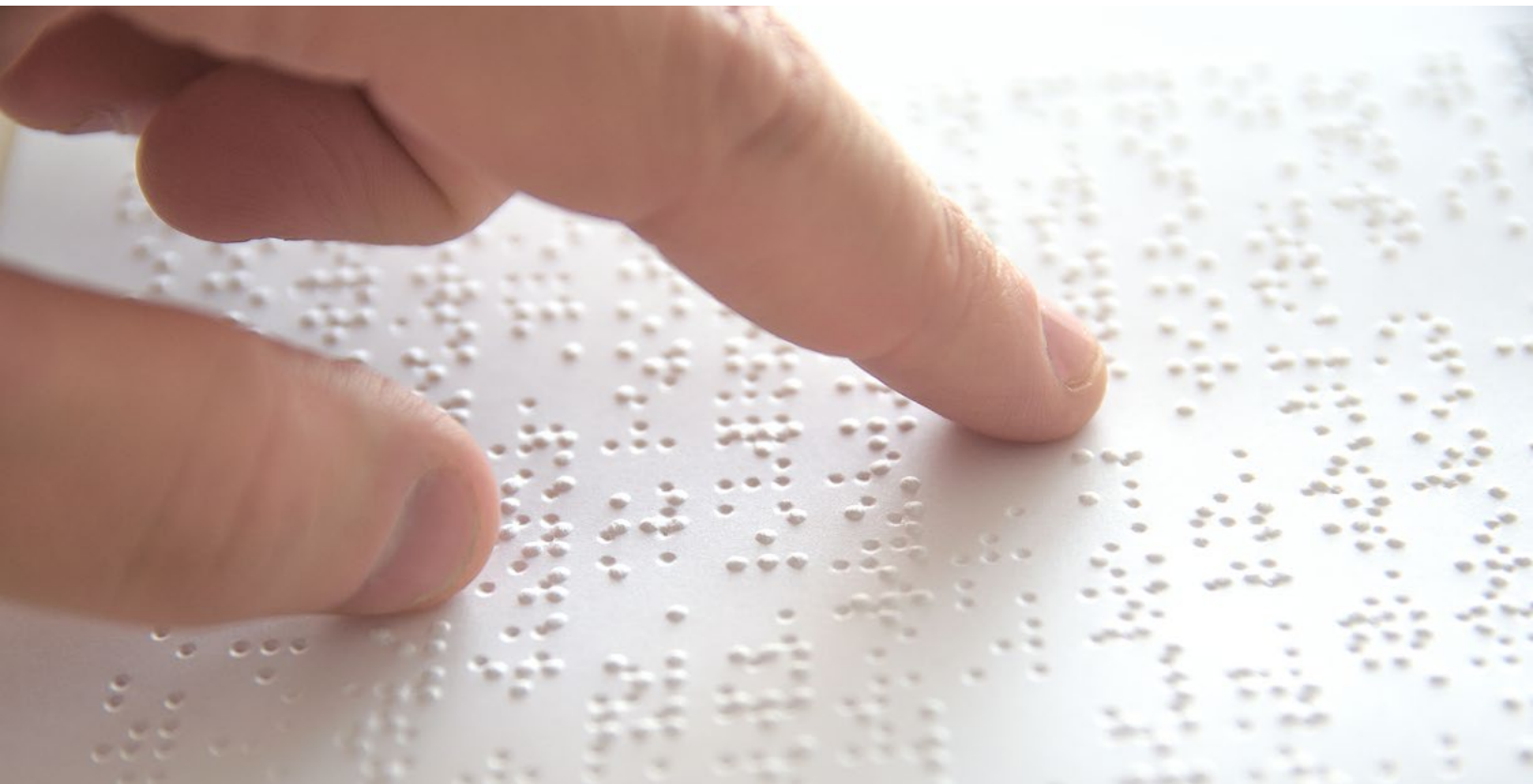


## Provincial

**Pathways to Recreation, Parks, and Recreation Ontario (2014):** This initiative by Parks and Recreation Ontario aims to enhance the accessibility of public spaces for persons with disabilities through educational resources like guidebooks and webinars. It provides practical advice and interpretations of accessibility standards, helping municipal and not-for-profit organizations modify spaces to be more inclusive, thereby promoting community participation in recreation.

**Ontario Human Rights Code:** The Code protects individuals from discrimination and harassment based on disabilities. It includes policies like accessible education, drug and alcohol testing, ableism, and preventing discrimination based on mental health disabilities and addictions. These policies promote equal rights for persons with disabilities in various aspects of life. Section 8 of the Code outlines the duty to accommodate the needs of people with disabilities to ensure people with disabilities have equal opportunities, access and benefits. Further, that employment, housing, services and facilities, should be designed inclusively and must be adapted to accommodate the needs of a person with a disability in a way that promotes integration and full participation.

**Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) (2005):** The AODA mandates organizations to follow standards to increase accessibility for people with disabilities, aiming for full accessibility in Ontario by 2025. It covers information and communications, employment, transportation, design of public spaces, and customer service. Organizations must develop accessibility policies, identify and remove barriers, and make accessibility plans to ensure equal opportunities for persons with disabilities.







## Local

**Town of Aurora Parks and Recreation Master Plan (2023):** The plan focuses on inclusivity for persons with disabilities by removing barriers and redesigning facilities and services to align with AODA requirements. It outlines actions the Town will take such as conducting a Recreation Needs Assessment for Persons with Disabilities, barrier-free training, safe spaces provision, and designing facilities with accessibility features.

**Town of Aurora Accessibility Plan (2022):** The plan outlines the Town's commitment to accessibility, outlining priorities like updating policies and providing accessible customer service, information, and transportation. It aims to create an inclusive work environment and ensure the design of public spaces exceeds accessibility standards.

**Town of Aurora Accessibility Design Standards (2022):** These standards aim to create a universally accessible community by implementing the latest building and AODA standards, prioritizing principles like equitable use, flexibility, simplicity, and low physical effort to ensure facilities are usable by all residents.

**Town of Aurora Sport Plan (2016):** The plan aims to promote inclusivity for persons with disabilities in sport, ensuring equitable access and engagement. It recommends collaborating with agencies supporting persons with disabilities to understand their needs and offers resources and webinars to promote inclusivity in sports programs.

**Town of Aurora Strategic Plan (2011-2031):** The Strategic Plan envisions an inclusive community that supports multi-generational engagement in cultural and recreational activities, including persons with disabilities. It recognizes the increasing population of individuals living with disabilities and aims to provide accessible and inclusive recreation options.

A full list and description of documents is provided in **Appendix B**.





## By the Numbers

As the Town of Aurora grows and diversifies, ensuring inclusive and accessible recreation for persons with disabilities is essential.



### Population Growth

Aurora experienced significant population growth from 2006 to 2021, increasing by 30.1% to reach 62,057 residents. Projections estimate further growth to 79,000 by 2041.



### Aging and Diversifying Population

There has been a notable increase in the population aged 65 and over, growing by 36% between 2016 and 2021. This demographic is expected to place greater demands on accessible and senior-oriented recreational programs. According to national research, mental health related disabilities are also increasing among youth and young adults.

Aurora has a racially and ethnically diverse population with 36.8% of its population being immigrants as of 2021, which is higher than the Ontario average. The largest non-European ethnic groups include Chinese, West Asian, and South Asian communities.



### Population with Disabilities

Data suggests that approximately 10,000 adults living in Aurora have some form of disability.<sup>2</sup> With the aging of the population and continued population growth, this number is expected to grow by 42%, reaching about 14,170 persons with disabilities in Aurora by 2036.

<sup>2</sup> This figure is based on consultant estimates using Statistics Canada, Participation and Activity Limitation Survey 2006 and Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on Disability, 2017. More recent Statistics Canada Data reports 27% of Canadians aged 15 and older had at least one disability (2022). Recent data can be found at: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-627-m/11-627-m2023063-eng.htm>





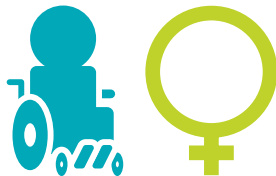
### Income Disparities

Although Aurora generally has an affluent population, 20% of the Town's households had an income of less than \$60,000 in 2020. People with disabilities are twice as likely to live in poverty. As well, recent research highlights that this figure is artificially low due to an ableist bias<sup>3</sup> in the calculations for the cost of living.



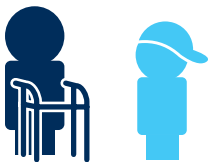
### Youth and Disabilities

The rate of disabilities among youth (ages 15-24) in Aurora is noted to be lower than the provincial and national averages.



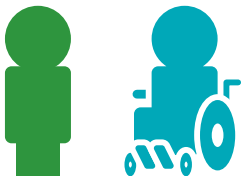
### Gender and Disability

Overall, females were more likely to have a disability.



### Disability Prevalence

Based on the 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability, pain-related, flexibility, and mobility are the most commonly reported disabilities for people over the age of 65, while mental health and learning are the highest form of disabilities reported for youth (15-24 years).<sup>4</sup>



### Severity of Disabilities

In Ontario, 35.5% of adults over the age of 15 have mild disabilities, while 23.5% report very severe disabilities.



### Activity Levels

Persons with disabilities have a lower participation rate in sports and recreation.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2017001/article/54854-eng.htm>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1310037601&pickMembers%5B0%5D=1.1&pickMembers%5B1%5D=2.5&pickMembers%5B2%5D=3.1&cubeTimeFrame.startYear=2022&cubeTimeFrame.endYear=2022&referencePeriods=20220101%2C20220101>



## Community Insights

Hearing from the community was central to creating Mapping Recreation for Persons with Disabilities. The goal of the engagement process was to hear directly from as many disabled people as possible in order to have a better understanding of current needs, existing challenges and barriers, and also opportunities for creating more welcoming, safe, and accessible programming. In addition to hearing from persons with disabilities, the engagement process reached out to caregivers and family members of persons with disabilities, disability organizations and networks, the Town's Accessibility Advisory Committee and Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee, Town Staff and Members of Council, and Region of York Staff.



**Focus Groups:**  
community organizations, caregivers, Town Staff, Town of Aurora Parks and Recreation Accessibility Advisory Committee



**Interviews:**  
Members of Council, Town Staff, community organizations



**Online Surveys:**  
community organizations, persons with disabilities, caregivers



**Telephone Surveys:**  
persons with disabilities, parents and caregivers

Over the course of the engagement activities, approximately 335 residents and stakeholders provided their insights and shared their experiences in the development of the Plan. This includes at least 144 people with disabilities and over 100 caregivers and parents. In addition, over 16 community organizations provided their input.

Community members and local disability organizations provided valuable insights into current recreational programming. A brief summary is provided here.

For the full *What We Are Hearing Report*, please go to [engageaurora.ca/rna](https://engageaurora.ca/rna).

### What's Working

The Town of Aurora has been successful in creating welcoming and inclusive recreational programs, which the majority of participants who responded to our survey find accommodating and satisfying. Specific strengths noted include a variety of inclusive programming options, adapted fitness and music programs and sensory-friendly environments. Additionally, the quality of care and supportive staff during summer and spring break camps has been particularly appreciated, contributing to positive and inclusive experiences for participants.





## Some Challenges

Many persons with disabilities are currently not participating in recreational activities, with two-thirds of survey respondents indicating barriers to participation. Financial barriers, insufficient accessible facilities, and transportation issues are significant hurdles. Moreover, there is a noted lack of awareness about available programs, which may prevent some community members from participating altogether. Other barriers identified include a lack of sufficient support, especially for individuals with complex needs, and the need for additional staff training.

## Opportunities

There are several opportunities suggested by the community that can enhance the accessibility and inclusivity of recreational programs. Expanding recreation options for persons with disabilities was highlighted throughout the engagement events, with suggestions for activities such as wheelchair basketball, blind soccer, inclusive dance, sitting volleyball, sensory integration activities, and expanding recreation programming to include cultural programming such as art and music.

Other opportunities put forward include creating more volunteer and employment opportunities for people with disabilities to ensure better representation, engagement and to provide the Town's recreation with the benefit of expertise from those with lived experience. Increasing the availability of adaptive sport and fitness equipment was also emphasized. Additionally, improving communication about program offerings and increasing community engagement can help raise awareness and accessibility.





## Community Priorities

Through the needs assessment phase of developing the Recreation Plan for Persons with Disabilities, including feedback and input from the disability community, the following priorities are identified:

1. **Inclusive Programming:** Ensure diversity of programming that is inclusive, adaptable to individual needs, and provides disabled participants with equitable access to the known benefits of recreation.
2. **Quality of Care and Support:** Prioritize well-trained staff and adequate resources to provide support, enhancing the overall experience for participants.
3. **Accessible Spaces and Programs:** Address financial, transportation, and accessibility barriers to full participation.
4. **Representation and Engagement:** Create volunteer and employment opportunities for persons with disabilities, creating more active engagement and representation in all aspects of recreation.
5. **Adaptive Equipment and Supports:** Increase the availability of adaptive sport and fitness equipment and provide more support to ensure inclusivity and greater accessibility.
6. **Communication and Awareness:** Enhance communication and awareness of program offerings with diverse and accessible information distribution.
7. **Strengthening Community Partnerships:** Foster and deepen partnerships with local organizations, businesses and community groups to expand resources, share expertise, and co-create programs that cater to the diverse needs and desires of persons with disabilities.







# Our Plan, Our Promise

## Building Belonging.

**NOTHING ABOUT US, WITHOUT US.**



To build a better future, it is necessary to understand the past and honestly evaluate the present. The Town of Aurora acknowledges the history of exclusion of disabled people in Canada. The country's policies and practice have been shaped by ableism, resulting in profound harm to people with disabilities and deep loss to their families and communities. Today, even with the large institutions closed, and many important rights achieved, significant barriers to the full and meaningful inclusion of disabled people remain, and new ones continue to emerge.

Eliminating ableism from our communities is neither quick nor easy, but it is both possible and essential. In this regard the Town recognizes the essential role of lived experience and is guided by the disability community's principle of "nothing about us without us."

Belonging is difficult to describe but its absence is unmistakable. No one should feel left out or left behind. A sense of belonging is important for the health and well-being of a person and the community.

Participation in recreation is an excellent touchstone for measuring belonging. Building belonging goes beyond making disabled people's presence possible. People join programs when they are accessible, safe, inviting, exciting, fun and pleasurable experiences.

We recognize that many do not feel that sense of welcome and belonging in our town's recreation programs. That's why the Town of Aurora is taking these important measures. We asked where we have succeeded and where change is still needed. And we will keep asking those questions.

The Town of Aurora is mapping out a plan and we fully expect it will need to be adjusted and there will be trial and error, but there will also be successes large and small and a constant move forward. As a town, we are excited! This is not a new beginning, but it is a renewed commitment from the Town of Aurora to our disabled community members. Your thoughts, hopes, critiques, dreams, concerns, triumphs, ideas, knowledge, and experience all belong here.

You belong in Aurora.



The Canadian Disability Participation Project (CDPP) has developed the Quality Parasport Framework<sup>5</sup>, which includes six key building blocks of quality sport experience:

- Autonomy (having independence, choice and control)
- Belongingness (feeling included, accepted, and part of a group)
- Challenge (feeling appropriately tested)
- Engagement (feeling focused, absorbed or “in the zone”)
- Mastery (experiencing competence or a sense of accomplishment)
- Meaning (contributing toward a personally or socially meaningful goal)



<sup>5</sup> <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1469029217306908>  
<https://sirc.ca/blog/sport-participation-canadians-with-disabilities/>



## Guiding Principles

### Accessibility

All facilities, programs, and services should be accessible to everyone.

### Adaptability

Successful programs adapt as required to ensure the participation and enjoyment of different disabled people. Exclusion is a failure of design and occurs at the program level not at the person-level.

### Equity

Ensure no one is being left behind. And provide an equitable experience that places no (or as little as possible) additional burden on the disabled person compared to that of non-disabled users.

### Inclusivity

Design programs that are welcoming to all, regardless of the type or severity of disability.

### Diversity

Recognize and accommodate the diversity of the community, considering income levels, family make-up, intersectionality, and range of disabilities. Consider how these may affect barriers and access and in turn how solutions can be incorporated into the design and delivery of programs.

### Self-empowerment

Focus on allowing disabled people to build community connections, relationships, confidence, explore their interests, and be free to empower themselves by providing equitable access to recreation.

### Quality and Innovation

Strive for high-quality user-experience and service delivery and be open to innovative approaches to recreation that leverage new technologies and ideas that can enhance participation and enjoyment for people with disabilities.

### User-friendly

The process for participating in Town of Aurora recreation programs should be designed to be user-friendly. This includes finding ways to streamline and communicate information that has already been shared by disabled adult, or parent of a disabled child, from one program to another within the Town.

These principles aim to foster an environment where disabled people can actively participate in and benefit from recreational activities, promoting not only physical health but also social integration and emotional well-being.





## Action!

### GOAL 1: Ensure diversity of programming that is inclusive, adaptable to individual needs, and empowering.

1. Introduce a wide range of inclusive and adaptive programs catering to various disabilities, interests, and age groups.

Community feedback highlighted the importance of diverse programming options that are inclusive and self-empowering. Participants expressed a strong desire for activities that accommodate a wide range of disabilities, ages, and interests. Suggestions from the community include activities such as blind hockey and blind soccer, wheelchair basketball and wheelchair curling, sledge hockey, sitting volleyball, inclusive dance, bocce, aquafit, adapted swimming, sensory integration activities, among others. Feedback also emphasized the need to include arts, music, and cultural activities as well as recreation and sport in program design.

Suggestions for unstructured outdoor activities and spaces were also highlighted. Additional considerations include ensuring program diversity for all ages (including youth and adults) and looking at offering flexibility in timing of programming (i.e., daytime and evenings). By offering a variety of programs, Aurora can meet the broad spectrum of community needs, thereby enhancing skill development, confidence, and overall empowerment of participants.

In addition, it is recommended that as part of ensuring diversity of programming, the Town continue to offer, and expand, virtual programming options to mitigate transportation barriers and expand access to recreation opportunities.

*This action is intended to be implemented in collaboration with Actions 23 and 24, which focus on working with local disability organizations and partners.*

2. Implement regular training for staff on anti-ableism, disability culture, creating inclusion and adaptive techniques.

Qualified staff who are committed and empowered to create the conditions necessary for people to be included and feel as though they are Intended Participants, are essential to guarantee the best recreational experience for persons with disabilities. Regular training will ensure that staff remain current about the new and emerging adaptive techniques and disability issues, which are crucial for creating a supportive and inclusive environment.



3. Offer “Try It” days for individuals to experience different activities and find what best suits their needs, enhancing self-empowerment and choice.

The suggestion for “Try It” days came from community feedback which suggested that limited exposure and uncertainty can deter participation in new activities. These events would provide participants with opportunities to sample various activities without the pressure of long-term commitment, allowing them to discover what best meets their interests and needs, thus promoting greater choice in recreational pursuits.

4. Develop a feedback mechanism to continuously adapt programs based on participant feedback and evolving needs.

Research, including consultation activities, highlighted the need to adapt to the changing needs of participants, particularly as disabilities and preferences can vary widely and change over time. Creating a structured feedback mechanism will ensure that the programs remain responsive and relevant, enhancing user satisfaction and participation rates by directly incorporating user insights and experiences into program development and adjustment processes.



## **GOAL 2: Prioritize well-trained staff and adequate resources to provide support, enhancing the overall experience for participants.**

1. Establish a continuous professional development program for staff focused on inclusivity, emergency preparedness, communication strategies, and specific disability accommodations.

The need for new and ongoing staff training was a key outcome from community consultations. This professional development program will equip staff with the skills necessary to interact effectively and respectfully with participants, addressing specific needs and improving safety through emergency preparedness training. Such initiatives ensure that all participants can enjoy a safe, inclusive, and supportive environment.

2. Ensure resources (staff, equipment, facility, budget) are adequate to meet the individual needs of participants, particularly for those requiring more intensive support.

There is strong demand across communities, including Aurora, for programs that provide adequate support for people with complex needs. By ensuring adequate resources, including staffing, equipment, and facilities, the Town can better address the diverse and sometimes intensive needs of persons with disabilities, thereby enhancing their recreational experience. Adequate ratios are essential for providing the necessary attention and support, ensuring safety, and fostering a more personalized and rewarding interaction with participants.

By establishing a more robust feedback mechanism (Recommendation 1.4) and by establishing an Accessibility Concierge Coordinator position (Recommendation 6.3), there will be valuable insights to help inform appropriate resource needs.

3. Create a volunteer program that includes people with disabilities to offer peer support, share experiences, and assist in program delivery.

Recruiting volunteers with disabilities can have a positive impact on the inclusivity and effectiveness of recreational programs. Feedback from the community indicated a strong support for programs that involve peers who share similar experiences, as they can provide unique insights and empathetic support that staff might not offer. The Town could consider providing honorariums for volunteers.





### **GOAL 3: Address financial, transportation, and accessibility barriers to full participation.**

1. Explore opportunities to make programs more affordable for individuals with disabilities.

While the Town does have a recreation program subsidy for qualifying residents (**F.A.I.R. ACCESS**), financial barriers are an obstacle to participation for many individuals with disabilities, as highlighted during community consultations. By further exploring various funding sources, subsidies, and sliding scale fees, the Town can ensure that financial constraints do not prevent individuals from accessing and benefiting from recreational programs.

It is also recommended that the Town also explore improvements to the Mediator Pass (pass for support person) to ensure that everyone with a disability who needs a support person to attend and participate can bring the person of their choice at no cost.

2. Advocate to local transportation services to improve accessible transportation options to and from recreational facilities.

Transportation has been consistently identified as a barrier to participation for individuals with disabilities. Advocating to local transportation services to enhance accessibility will help ensure that individuals can physically access facilities without undue hardship. This could include advocating for coordinated schedules, accessible vehicles, and dedicated services that align with program times and locations.

3. Develop a strategy to review and implement recommendations from Town facility audit to continue to address physical barriers, ensuring that all Town spaces are truly accessible.

Regular facility audits help identify existing physical barriers that may prevent full participation from individuals with disabilities. The Town of Aurora completed facility accessibility audits for its community centres in 2023. Developing a strategic plan to address these findings ensures improvement and compliance with accessibility standards, as well as supporting the Town's commitment to ensuring that recreational spaces are welcoming and accessible to everyone.



**GOAL 4: Create volunteer and employment opportunities for persons with disabilities, creating more active engagement and representation in all aspects of recreation.**

1. Develop a dedicated outreach program to recruit volunteers and employees with disabilities.

Consultation activities emphasized the importance of ensuring the disability community is activity engaged and represented through all aspects of recreation. Actively recruiting individuals with disabilities enhances workforce diversity and brings valuable perspectives into program development and delivery. Ensuring that job and volunteer postings are accessible and widely promoted helps to encourage participation from a diverse group of potential volunteers and employees.

2. Implement a mentorship program that pairs experienced individuals with disabilities in leadership roles with those interested in volunteer or employment opportunities in recreation.

In addition to volunteering and employment opportunities, identified in the above recommendation, mentorship programs can help provide support, guidance, and leadership development opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

3. Explore expansion of the Town’s Accessibility Advisory Committee and ensure it is a lens for all major Town planning and communication initiatives.

The Accessibility Advisory Committee plays a crucial role in guiding and influencing the Town’s policies and practices to be more inclusive. By expanding its membership, the committee can incorporate a wider array of perspectives and experiences, which is vital for ensuring that all major planning and communication initiatives consider, and meet, the needs of people with disabilities.



## **GOAL 5: Increase the availability of adaptive sport and fitness equipment and provide more support to ensure inclusivity and greater accessibility.**

1. Pursue funding through grants, donations, and partnerships to purchase adaptive equipment.

Securing funding is essential to support the acquisition of adaptive sport and fitness equipment, which has been a clear aspiration identified through community feedback. Grants, donations, and partnerships can provide the financial resources necessary to enhance the availability and variety of adaptive equipment, making recreational activities more accessible and inclusive for all members of the community.

2. Organize adaptive equipment demonstration days for participants to try different equipment and provide feedback on what works best for their needs.

Demonstration days can be a valuable opportunity for participants to engage directly with various types of adaptive equipment. This engagement not only allows individuals to find the best tools for their specific needs but also involves them in the decision-making process. Feedback from these events can further guide the town in making informed choices about future equipment purchases, ensuring that the investments are well-aligned with user needs and preferences.

3. Develop training program to ensure staff are knowledgeable about proper equipment use, maintenance and safety protocols for adaptive equipment.

Training staff to be proficient in the use of adaptive equipment ensures that all participants can use the facilities safely and effectively. This training is critical, not just for the direct operation of the equipment but also for routine maintenance and troubleshooting. Properly trained staff are better equipped to assist participants and enhance their overall experience, addressing one of the core barriers to participation.





## **GOAL 6: Enhance communication and awareness of program offerings with diverse and accessible information distribution.**

1. Develop a communications strategy to support program awareness and engagement.

Community consultation activities highlighted that there are persons with disabilities in Aurora who want to, but are not currently, participating in recreation activities. One reason, among others, is a lack of awareness of what is currently being offered in the community. A communications strategy that leverages a mix of digital platforms, social media, and local media partnerships can help to effectively reach and engage the entire community.

2. Host an annual expo to promote awareness and community engagement.

As part of the strategy, it is suggested that the Town consider hosting an annual expo or fair-type event to bring community partners together to share information on current programming, events, and activities. The event could also celebrate local disabled athletes and artists.

This event could also incorporate adaptive equipment demonstration days (as outlined in Action 15).

3. Continue to create accessible informational materials in various formats and languages to reach a diverse audience in conjunction with strategies Corporate Communications is undertaking.

Producing materials in multiple accessible formats (i.e., large print, Braille, audio) and languages ensures inclusivity, particularly for individuals with visual impairments or those whose first language is not English.

4. Create a new full time permanent program coordinator position dedicated to persons with disabilities.

An Accessibility Concierge Coordinator position provides a personalized contact point for potential participants, especially beneficial for those who may need additional assistance navigating the registration process or have specific inquiries about program suitability and support services. The Program Coordinator for Persons with Disabilities acts at the discretion and direction of a disabled person or family member to provide additional program information, assist in registration, coordinate support needs, and follow-up during and after the program. This direct connection can alleviate uncertainties and foster a more welcoming and supportive environment. They are also understood by staff to have a role and ability to direct resources, request adaptations, and accommodations, and provide feedback on behalf of clients. It is anticipated that this position will be a full-time permanent coordinator position.

This position will have the same responsibilities as other program coordinators with a focus on programming for and supporting persons with a disability



5. Implement a centralized, accessible webpage where participants can easily find information about programs, register, and provide feedback.

A centralized webpage simplifies the process of finding information, registering for programs, and providing feedback, which is vital for continuous improvement. This platform can help address frustrations with fragmented information sources and provides a user-friendly, accessible way for all community members to engage with recreation services.

6. Consider further enhancements to Town’s Recreation Guide to ensure easy access to information needed to guide programming decisions.

In addition to creating an webpage (Recommendation 6.4), it is suggested that the Town look at opportunities to further enhance the Recreation Guide. Participants emphasized the importance of enhancing recreation guides with clear information on adaptability and inclusiveness to facilitate informed decision-making. Suggestions include using icons and illustrations to ‘code’ various program types, and also using photos and videos where possible to show community facilities and program spaces. This additional transparency can help alleviate anxiety about unknown environments and aid in decision-making, especially for those with specific accessibility needs.



**GOAL 7: Foster and deepen partnerships with local organizations, businesses, and community groups to expand resources, share expertise, and co-create programs that cater to the diverse needs and desires of persons with disabilities.**

1. Work with local disability organizations and groups to continue to identify program needs and opportunities to collaborate on service delivery.

Collaborating with local disability organizations is helpful in accurately identifying the ongoing and evolving needs of persons with disabilities. These partnerships ensure that the programming remains relevant and effective, drawing on the specialized knowledge of these groups to tailor services that truly meet community needs. Collaboration may include establishing a 'partners group' to meet semi-annually to learn about community trends and initiatives. It could also include sharing information on new programs and activities.

2. Partner with local organizations and experts to provide specialized training and resources for staff.

Partnering with experts and organizations for staff training ensures that recreational services are delivered with a high level of competence and sensitivity towards the needs of persons with disabilities. This specialized training can include topics like disability awareness, adaptive sports techniques, and inclusive communication practices, thereby improving the quality of interaction between staff and participants and enhancing the overall program effectiveness.

3. Partner with community organizations, disability advocacy groups, and local sports clubs to explore opportunities to bring additional resources and expertise to Town programming.

Forming partnerships with various community entities expands the range and depth of resources available for recreational programming. These collaborations can bring additional expertise, volunteers, equipment, and other resources that might not be otherwise available. By incorporating diverse perspectives and resources, the town can offer more comprehensive and appealing programs that cater to a wider array of interests and needs within the disability community.





## Implementation Plan

The Implementation Plan is intended to support the full achievement of the Town of Aurora’s Mapping Recreation for Persons with Disabilities. This Implementation Plan puts forward action timelines, potential resource needs and partnerships, and key indicators.

Actions have been organized by the 7 Plan Goals:

- GOAL 1: Ensure diversity of programming that is inclusive, adaptable to individual needs, and empowering.**
- GOAL 2: Prioritize well-trained staff and adequate resources to provide support, enhancing the overall experience for participants.**
- GOAL 3: Address financial, transportation, and accessibility barriers to full participation.**
- GOAL 4: Create volunteer and employment opportunities for persons with disabilities, creating more active engagement and representation in all aspects of recreation.**
- GOAL 5: Increase the availability of adaptive sport and fitness equipment and provide more support to ensure inclusivity and greater accessibility.**
- GOAL 6: Enhance communication and awareness of program offerings with diverse and accessible information distribution.**
- GOAL 7: Foster and deepen partnerships with local organizations, businesses, and community groups to expand resources, share expertise, and co-create programs that cater to the diverse needs and desires of persons with disabilities.**

Importantly, it is intended that this Implementation Plan be reviewed on an annual basis and updated as required. As Mapping Recreation for Persons with Disabilities moves forward, it will be up to Town Staff to bring forward items to Council, as appropriate, for budget and other support needs.

The overall leadership and coordination of the Plan will rest with the Community Services Department, while seeking the advice and guidance from the Town’s Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) and Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee (PRAC), and additional engagement with other members of Town staff and community partners as needed.



Action	Timeline	Resource Considerations	Potential Partners	Indicators
<b>GOAL 1: Ensure diversity of programming that is inclusive, adaptable to individual needs, and empowering.</b>				
1. Introduce a wide range of inclusive and adaptive programs catering to various disabilities, interests, and age groups.  (Collaborate with Actions #23 and #25)	O	MODERATE - HIGH Staff time for program development New staff required, new equipment costs Modifications and maintenance of facilities	<u>External</u> • Local disability organizations (Community Living, Autistics for Autistics, Holland Bloorview, etc.) • Sport organizations • Boards of Education • Members of disability community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of new programs introduced</li> <li>• Participation rates among individuals with disabilities</li> <li>• Participant satisfaction surveys</li> </ul>
2. Implement regular training for staff on anti-ableism, disability culture, creating inclusion and adaptive techniques.	S	MODERATE Staff time Fees for professional trainers	<u>External</u> • Disability advocacy groups  <u>Internal</u> • Human Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of training sessions conducted</li> <li>• Staff attendance and completion rates</li> <li>• Improvement in staff knowledge and attitudes (pre- and post-training surveys)</li> </ul>
3. Offer “Try It” days for individuals to experience different activities and find what best suits their needs, enhancing self-empowerment and choice.	S	LOW Staff time to facilitate events Potential marketing costs	<u>External</u> • Disability organizations • Local sport organization • members of disability community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of “Try It” events held annually</li> <li>• Participant turnout and engagement levels</li> <li>• Feedback from participants on their experiences</li> </ul>
4. Develop a feedback mechanism to continuously adapt programs based on participant feedback and evolving needs.	S O	LOW Staff time for development and staff time for monitoring		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frequency and quality of feedback received</li> <li>• Number of program adjustments made based on feedback</li> <li>• Participant satisfaction post-implementation of changes</li> </ul>

**Timelines:** O = Ongoing S = Short Term (1-2 years) L = Longer Term (3-5 years)

**Resource Level Estimates:** Low = Less than \$5,000 Moderate = Between \$5,000 and \$20,000 High = Greater than \$20,000 **30**



Action	Timeline	Resource Considerations	Potential Partners	Indicators
<b>GOAL 2: Prioritize well-trained staff and adequate resources to provide support, enhancing the overall experience for participants.</b>				
1. Establish a continuous professional development program for staff focused on inclusivity, emergency preparedness, communication strategies, and specific disability accommodations.  (Collaborate with Action #24)	S  O	LOW – MODERATE  Staff time to develop program  Possible resources required for trainers, consultants for initial program development	<u>Internal</u>  • Human Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of professional development sessions conducted</li> <li>• Staff participation and feedback</li> <li>• Improvement in staff readiness and participant satisfaction</li> <li>• Staff-to-participant ratios in various programs</li> <li>• Participant and caregiver feedback</li> <li>• Safety and incident reports</li> </ul>
2. Ensure resources (staff, equipment, facility, budget) are adequate to meet the individual needs of participants, particularly for those requiring more intensive support.	O	HIGH  Staff time for establishing guidelines, and monitoring and evaluation	<u>External</u>  • Disability support agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff-to-participant ratios in various programs</li> <li>• Participant and caregiver feedback</li> <li>• Safety and incident reports</li> </ul>
3. Create a volunteer program that includes people with disabilities to offer peer support, share experiences, and assist in program delivery.	S	MODERATE  Staff time for program development, recruitment and coordination	<u>External</u>  • Local disability organizations • Members of disability community • Volunteer agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of volunteers recruited and trained</li> <li>• Feedback from participants and volunteers</li> <li>• Increased participation and satisfaction in programs</li> </ul>

**Timelines:** O = Ongoing S = Short Term (1-2 years) L = Longer Term (3-5 years)

**Resource Level Estimates:** Low = Less than \$5,000 Moderate = Between \$5,000 and \$20,000 High = Greater than \$20,000



Action	Timeline	Resource Considerations	Potential Partners	Indicators
<b>GOAL 3: Address financial, transportation, and accessibility barriers to full participation.</b>				
1. Explore opportunities to make programs more affordable for individuals with disabilities.	O	MODERATE Staff time to manage program Increased budget for financial assistance program	<u>Internal</u> • Finance Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of participants receiving financial assistance</li> <li>• Increase in program participation among individuals with disabilities</li> <li>• Participant satisfaction surveys</li> </ul>
2. Advocate to local transportation services to improve accessible transportation options to and from recreational facilities.	S	HIGH Staff time	<u>External</u> • York Region • Community transportation services • Local advocacy groups • AAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of accessible transportation options available</li> <li>• Usage rates of transportation services by individuals with disabilities</li> <li>• Participant feedback on transportation accessibility and convenience</li> </ul>
3. Develop a strategy to review and implement recommendations from Town facility audit to continue to address physical barriers, ensuring that all Town spaces are truly accessible.	L	HIGH Staff time for strategy development (planning) *Costs for facility upgrades and maintenance to be identified as part of strategy development	<u>Internal</u> • Accessibility Advisor • Facilities Division	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of facility upgrades for accessibility</li> <li>• Compliance with accessibility standards</li> <li>• Participant feedback on facility accessibility</li> </ul>

**Timelines:** O = Ongoing S = Short Term (1-2 years) L = Longer Term (3-5 years)

**Resource Level Estimates:** Low = Less than \$5,000 Moderate = Between \$5,000 and \$20,000 High = Greater than \$20,000 **32**





Action	Timeline	Resource Considerations	Potential Partners	Indicators
<b>GOAL 4: Create volunteer and employment opportunities for persons with disabilities, creating more active engagement and representation in all aspects of recreation.</b>				
1. Develop a dedicated outreach program to recruit volunteers and employees with disabilities.	L	LOW Staff time to develop program and manage	<u>External</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local disability organizations</li> <li>Employment agencies</li> <li>Local businesses</li> <li>Boards of Education</li> </ul> <u>Internal</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Human Resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of volunteers and employees with disabilities recruited</li> <li>Job satisfaction and retention rates</li> <li>Participant and employee feedback</li> </ul>
2. Implement a mentorship program that pairs experienced individuals with disabilities in leadership roles with those interested in volunteer or employment opportunities in recreation.	S	LOW Staff time to develop and implement program	<u>External</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local disability organizations,</li> <li>Members of disability community</li> </ul> <u>Internal</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>AAC</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of mentorship pairs established</li> <li>Mentee satisfaction and development</li> <li>Mentor feedback and program success stories</li> </ul>
3. Explore expansion of the Town’s Accessibility Advisory Committee membership, and ensure it is a lens for all major Town planning and communication initiatives.	O	LOW Staff time (Mayor’s Office, Clerks), AAC time	<u>Internal</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mayor’s Office</li> <li>Clerks Department</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of new members added to the committee</li> <li>Impact of committee recommendations on Town initiatives</li> <li>Feedback from committee members on their involvement</li> </ul>

**Timelines:** O = Ongoing S = Short Term (1-2 years) L = Longer Term (3-5 years)

**Resource Level Estimates:** Low = Less than \$5,000 Moderate = Between \$5,000 and \$20,000 High = Greater than \$20,000



Action	Timeline	Resource Considerations	Potential Partners	Indicators
<b>GOAL 5: Increase the availability of adaptive sport and fitness equipment and provide more support to ensure inclusivity and greater accessibility.</b>				
1. Pursue funding through grants, donations, and partnerships to purchase adaptive equipment.	O	MODERATE Staff time for grant applications, partner outreach	<u>External</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local community organizations,</li> <li>Service providers and other non-profit groups,</li> <li>Members of disability community</li> </ul> <u>Internal</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Finance Department</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Amount of funding secured</li> <li>Number of new adaptive equipment items purchased</li> <li>Usage rates of adaptive equipment</li> </ul>
2. Organize adaptive equipment demonstration days for participants to try different equipment and provide feedback on what works best for their needs.	S	LOW Staff time Marketing and promotion costs	<u>External</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local sports organizations,</li> <li>Equipment manufacturers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of demonstration days held annually</li> <li>Participant turnout and engagement levels</li> <li>Feedback from participants on equipment preferences</li> </ul>
3. Develop training program to ensure staff are knowledgeable about proper equipment use, maintenance and safety protocols for adaptive equipment.	L	LOW Staff time	<u>External</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adaptive equipment manufacturers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of staff trained</li> <li>Staff proficiency in equipment use and maintenance</li> <li>Safety and incident reports related to equipment use</li> </ul>

**Timelines:** O = Ongoing S = Short Term (1-2 years) L = Longer Term (3-5 years)

**Resource Level Estimates:** Low = Less than \$5,000 Moderate = Between \$5,000 and \$20,000 High = Greater than \$20,000



Action	Timeline	Resource Considerations	Potential Partners	Indicators
<b>GOAL 6: Enhance communication and awareness of program offerings with diverse and accessible information distribution.</b>				
1. Develop a communications strategy to support program awareness and engagement.	S	LOW Staff time to develop strategy Staff time (Communications) for promotion and communications	<u>Internal</u> • Corporate Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reach and engagement metrics for communications</li> <li>• Increase in program participation rates</li> <li>• Feedback on communication effectiveness</li> </ul>
2. Host an annual expo to promote awareness and community engagement.  (Collaborate with Action #15)	S	LOW Staff time for planning and coordination Event costs	<u>External</u> • Community organizations (i.e., Children’s Treatment Network) • Service providers • Sports organizations • Members of disability community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of attendees at the expo</li> <li>• Community engagement and feedback</li> <li>• Increase in awareness and program participation</li> </ul>
3. Continue to create accessible informational materials in various formats and languages to reach a diverse audience in conjunction with strategies Corporate Communications is undertaking.	O	HIGH Staff time (Communications) Cost of accessible materials	<u>External</u> • Local disability organizations • Members of disability community  <u>Internal</u> • Corporate Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of accessible materials created and distributed</li> <li>• Reach and engagement metrics</li> <li>• Feedback on material accessibility and usefulness</li> </ul>

**Timelines:** O = Ongoing S = Short Term (1-2 years) L = Longer Term (3-5 years)

**Resource Level Estimates:** Low = Less than \$5,000 Moderate = Between \$5,000 and \$20,000 High = Greater than \$20,000 **35**



Action	Timeline	Resource Considerations	Potential Partners	Indicators
<p>4. Create a new full time permanent program coordinator position dedicated to persons with disabilities.</p> <p>This position will have the same responsibilities as other program coordinators with a focus on programming for and supporting persons with a disability.</p>	S	<p>HIGH</p> <p>New Full-Time Permanent Coordinator Position dedicated to persons with disabilities</p>	<p><u>Internal</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Human Resources</li> <li>• Finance Department</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of new programs and services for persons with a disability</li> <li>• Participation rates of persons with a disability</li> </ul>
<p>5. Implement a centralized, accessible webpage where participants can easily find information about programs, register, and provide feedback.</p>	L	<p>MODERATE</p> <p>Staff time</p>	<p><u>Internal</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Corporate Communications</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of users accessing the webpage</li> <li>• Registration and feedback rates through the webpage</li> <li>• User satisfaction and ease of use metrics</li> </ul>
<p>6. Consider further enhancements to Town’s Recreation Guide to ensure easy access to information needed to guide programming decisions.</p>	S	<p>LOW</p> <p>Staff time to review, develop, evaluate guide</p>	<p><u>External</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disability organizations and advocacy groups</li> <li>• AAC</li> <li>• Members of disability community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of enhanced guides distributed/downloaded</li> <li>• Feedback on guide usefulness and accessibility</li> <li>• Increase in program inquiries and participation</li> </ul>

**Timelines:** O = Ongoing S = Short Term (1-2 years) L = Longer Term (3-5 years)

**Resource Level Estimates:** Low = Less than \$5,000 Moderate = Between \$5,000 and \$20,000 High = Greater than \$20,000 **36**





Action	Timeline	Resource Considerations	Potential Partners	Indicators
<b>GOAL 7: Foster and deepen partnerships with local organizations, businesses, and community groups to expand resources, share expertise, and co-create programs that cater to the diverse needs and desires of persons with disabilities.</b>				
1. Work with local disability organizations and groups to continue to identify program needs and opportunities to collaborate on service delivery.  (Collaborate with Action #1)	O	LOW Staff time for outreach and partnerships	<u>External</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local disability organizations, service providers</li> <li>Advocacy groups</li> <li>Members of disability community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of partnerships formed</li> <li>Joint programs and services developed</li> <li>Participant feedback on collaborative initiatives</li> </ul>
2. Partner with local organizations and experts to provide specialized training and resources for staff.  (Collaborate with Action #5)	S	LOW Staff time for partner outreach and coordination	<u>External</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community organizations</li> <li>Service providers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of training sessions held</li> <li>Staff feedback and skill improvement</li> <li>Enhanced service delivery and participant satisfaction</li> </ul>
3. Partner with community organizations, disability advocacy groups, and local sports clubs to explore opportunities to bring additional resources and expertise to Town programming.  (Collaborate with Action #1)	S	LOW Staff time to coordinate and manage partnerships	<u>External</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community organizations,</li> <li>Sports organizations</li> <li>Advocacy groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of collaborative programs initiated</li> <li>Participant engagement and feedback</li> <li>Increase in resources and expertise brought into programming</li> </ul>

The above table provides a summary of 25 recommended actions by goals. The following list summarizes actions by municipal roles: **Policy & Planning, Programming, Training, Communication, and Partnerships.**

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## **Policy & Planning (5)**

- 3.1 Explore opportunities to make programs more affordable for individuals with disabilities.
- 3.2 Advocate to local transportation services to improve accessible transportation options to and from recreational facilities.
- 3.3 Develop a strategy to review and implement recommendations from Town facility audit to continue to address physical barriers, ensuring that all Town spaces are truly accessible.
- 4.3 Explore expansion of the Town’s Accessibility Advisory Committee membership and ensure it is a lens for all major Town planning and communication initiatives.
- 5.1 Pursue funding through grants, donations, and partnerships to purchase adaptive equipment.

## **Programming (8)**

- 1.1 Introduce a wide range of inclusive and adaptive programs catering to various disabilities, interests, and age groups.
- 1.3 Offer “Try It” days for individuals to experience different activities and find what best suits their needs, enhancing self-empowerment and choice.
- 2.2 Ensure resources (staff, equipment, facility, budget) are adequate to meet the individual needs of participants, particularly for those requiring more intensive support.
- 2.3 Create a volunteer program that includes people with disabilities to offer peer support, share experiences, and assist in program delivery.
- 4.1 Develop a dedicated outreach program to recruit volunteers and employees with disabilities.
- 4.2 Implement a mentorship program that pairs experienced individuals with disabilities in leadership roles with those interested in volunteer or employment opportunities in recreation.
- 5.2 Organize adaptive equipment demonstration days for participants to try different equipment and provide feedback on what works best for their needs.
- 6.4 Create a new full-time permanent program coordinator position dedicated to persons with disabilities.

## **Training (3)**

- 1.2 Implement regular training for staff on anti-ableism, disability culture, creating inclusion and adaptive techniques.
- 2.1 Establish a continuous professional development program for staff focused on inclusivity, emergency preparedness, communication strategies, and specific disability accommodations.
- 5.3 Develop training program to ensure staff are knowledgeable about proper equipment use, maintenance and safety protocols for adaptive equipment.



### **Partnerships (3)**

- 7.1 Work with local disability organizations and groups to continue to identify program needs and opportunities to collaborate on service delivery.
- 7.2 Partner with local organizations and experts to provide specialized training and resources for staff.
- 7.3 Partner with community organizations, disability advocacy groups, and local sports clubs to explore opportunities to bring additional resources and expertise to Town programming.

### **Communication & Awareness (6)**

- 1.4 Develop a feedback mechanism to continuously adapt programs based on participant feedback and evolving needs.
- 6.1 Develop a communications strategy to support program awareness and engagement.
- 6.2 Host an annual expo to promote awareness and community engagement.
- 6.3 Continue to create accessible informational materials in various formats and languages to reach a diverse audience in conjunction with strategies Corporate Communications is undertaking.
- 6.5 Implement a centralized, accessible webpage where participants can easily find information about programs, register, and provide feedback.
- 6.6 Consider further enhancements to Town's Recreation Guide to ensure easy access to information needed to guide programming decisions.



## Appendix A: Current Town Programs

The Town of Aurora offers a diverse range of recreation programs to residents of all ages and abilities. A summary of the Town's Inclusion Programs are provided here.

### **Inclusion 1:1 Support (4-12)**

Inclusion 1:1 support staff are available to facilitate participation in all Town of Aurora recreation programs. A support staff may provide redirection for safety reasons and allow opportunities for sensory or emotional breaks.

### **Adaptive Intro to Water (Ages 4-10)**

Participant-led water exposure in a safe, sensory friendly and low-pressure environment. Designed for participants with disabilities who are not ready for Adaptive Swim Lessons. Class ratios are one instructor to two swimmers.

### **Adaptive Intro Swim Lessons (Ages 4 -10)**

Water safety and level 1 and 2 swim skills introduced and adapted for various levels of swimmers. Designed for participants with disabilities who are not ready for group lessons and with the goal to graduate into group lessons. Class ratios are two instructors to three to four participants.

### **Adapted Sensory Swim (All Ages)**

Adapted Sensory Swim is a drop-in public swimming program designed for individuals with disabilities to enjoy and experience swimming in a quieter environment. No music and minimal noise levels.

### **Adult – Grow (Ages 18+)**

Aimed at adults with exceptionalities, this program offers a place to develop friendships, life skills, and a sense of independence. It includes activities focused on practical life.

### **Aqua Buddies (All Ages)**

A volunteer program the swimmer is paired with a volunteer for the duration of the registered program. An Aqua Buddy can be made available for any swim program at either complex, any day of the week.

### **Arthritis Aquafit (Ages 18+)**

Club Aurora offers a 45-minute specialty class for people who suffer from arthritis. The objectives of these recreational exercises are to reduce pain, help maintain or increase joint mobility, and increase muscular strength and endurance.

### **Heart Wise Exercise (Ages 18+)**

This initiative is intended to integrate the cardiac population into mainstream programs for older adults with cardiovascular or mobility challenges. This is done by addressing physical and psychological needs. It provides exercise options to help participants choose appropriate programs and levels of intensities, while encouraging participants to do daily physical activities.





### **Inclusion – Camp SOAR (Ages 12 – 17)**

It's time to SOAR – See Our Abilities Rise! This adapted camp program specifically designed for youth with disabilities, campers will engage in activities that build on social skills, promote independence, and interact in a safe and supported setting. Campers will participate in a variety of active and passive indoor and outdoor activities with a focus on adventure, exploration, and fun. This camp will feature a sensory aware environment, smaller group sizes, and targeted adapted programming. Campers must be able to participate within a 1:3 staff to participant ratio. Those requiring 1:1 support in this adapted camp must register for “Inclusion 1:1 Support”.

### **Inclusive Swim Lessons (Ages 3+)**

Inclusive Swim classes are specifically designed for swimmers with disabilities. Aquatic staff are available to facilitate participation in group swim lessons. The aquatic staff will maintain a one-to-one instructor to swimmer ratio.

### **Play-Ability Kinder (Ages 4-7)**

A program specifically designed for young children with disabilities, focusing on developing fundamental motor and social skills. The program features a 1:4 staff-to-participant ratio to ensure attentive guidance and is structured to encourage children to engage in play that promotes physical activity and interaction in a supportive setting.

### **Move-Ability (Ages 5-10)**

This program introduces dance and movement as a form of physical literacy, encouraging children to express themselves through music and dance. It's an inclusive environment where participants are guided through warm-ups, sing-alongs, and movement activities that help develop rhythm and coordination.

### **Play-Ability Kids (Ages 8-12)**

This is an extension of the Kinder program for older children, aiming to strengthen social skills and appropriate play behaviors. It also helps in building physical literacy and fosters a space where children can participate in activities that promote interaction and physical engagement.

### **Soc-Ability (Ages 12-21)**

Recognizing the challenges of socializing for young people with disabilities, this virtual program provides a platform for social interaction and skill-building. Activities are designed to facilitate social discussions and connections in a moderated, safe online space. For some participants, especially those with more significant needs, parental or guardian support may be necessary.

The Town of Aurora has also recently added Bake-Ability and Cook-Ability and offers sensory swims. Sensory skating and sensory gym drop-in opportunities will be offered to the community effective Fall 2024.



## Appendix B: Current Policy Framework

Mapping Recreation for Persons with Disabilities aligns with, and builds on, policies and initiatives already in place and underway.

### International

#### UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities – **Article 30**

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) is an international human rights treaty adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 13 December 2006. Article 30 of the CRPD specifically addresses the rights of persons with disabilities to participate in cultural life, recreation, leisure, and sport. Key rights include:

- Persons with disabilities should have equal access to cultural materials, television programs, films, theatres, and other cultural activities in accessible formats. They should also have access to cultural venues like theatres, museums, cinemas, libraries, tourism services, and national monuments.
- Measures should be taken to enable persons with disabilities to develop and utilize their creative, artistic, and intellectual potential for both personal benefit and societal enrichment.
- Steps should be taken to ensure that intellectual property laws do not create unreasonable or discriminatory barriers for persons with disabilities in accessing cultural materials.
- Persons with disabilities should be recognized and supported in their specific cultural and linguistic identities, including sign languages and deaf culture.
- Recreational and Sporting Activities:
  - Encourage the fullest participation of persons with disabilities in mainstream sports at all levels.
  - Ensure opportunities for organizing and participating in disability-specific sports and recreational activities, providing appropriate instruction, training, and resources.
  - Persons with disabilities should have access to venues for sports, recreation, and tourism.
  - Ensure equal access for children with disabilities to play, recreation, leisure, and sports, including school activities.
  - Ensure persons with disabilities have access to services from those involved in organizing recreational, tourism, leisure, and sporting activities.

In addition, countries committed to the Convention are responsible for collecting relevant data, including statistics and research, to support policy development and implementation. This data collection must respect privacy and adhere to international human rights norms. The data should be disaggregated to evaluate the countries' adherence to the Convention and to identify challenges faced by persons with disabilities. Additionally, these countries are tasked with ensuring the dissemination and accessibility of this data to both persons with disabilities and the wider public. Canada, being a State Party to the CRPD, has ratified these provisions and is thereby committed to acting in various areas, such as legislation, policy, and practice, to implement the rights protected in Article 30. This includes adjustments and provisions to ensure that cultural, recreational, and sporting facilities and services are accessible to those with disabilities.



## National

### Recreation Framework in Canada (2015)

The Recreation Framework in Canada is a guiding document for public recreation providers. The Framework is intended to ensure that every Canadian citizen has access to meaningful and accessible recreation experiences. The Recreation Framework in Canada prioritizes the rights and needs of persons with disabilities by advocating for inclusive and accessible recreational experiences. It serves as a blueprint for recreation providers to create supportive physical and social environments. The Framework's leadership, including representation from disability groups, works to ensure that recreation policies and practices across Canada address the specific challenges faced by persons with disabilities, fostering their engagement in recreational activities that contribute to their well-being and full participation in community life.

### Pathways to Well-being Municipal Audit Tool

The Pathways to Well-being Municipal Audit Tool is intended to evaluate the quality-of-service pathways, focusing on clinical quality, processes for maintaining quality, referral accuracy, and patient information. It is structured to ensure that services conform to best practices and are inclusive, especially for vulnerable populations, including persons with disabilities. The tool assesses whether quality control measures are in place and if pathways support collaborative practices across the health system. It aims to enhance health equity and ensure that services are accessible and beneficial to all, including persons with disabilities.

### Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute (CFLRI)

The Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute (CFLRI) is a prominent national research organization that monitors physical activity, sports participation, and recreation in Canada. It has been instrumental in providing data and insights for the past 40 years, aiding policy and decision-makers, practitioners, and researchers to foster evidence-based practices. The CFLRI emphasizes the importance of an active lifestyle and supports various Canadian demographics, including persons with disabilities.

The CFLRI has conducted significant research and released publications focused on supporting inclusivity within sport and recreation, including:

- **Opportunities for Physical Activity at School Study:** Assesses physical activity and sport opportunities in schools, covering aspects like availability of programs, extracurricular activities, and inclusivity.
- **Survey of Physical Activity Opportunities in Canadian Communities:** Evaluates local community policies, programs, and infrastructure that support active lifestyles, with a focus on inclusivity for all populations.
- **Opportunities for Physical Activity at Work Study:** Examines workplace policies and programs that encourage physical activity, again with an eye toward inclusivity and support for all, including persons with disabilities.
- **Parent Survey:** Looks at opportunities for children's participation in physical activity and sport from a parental perspective, considering factors like barriers to participation which can include challenges faced by children with disabilities.



## **The Blueprint for Building Quality Participation in Sport for Children, Youth, and Adults with a Disability, including the Quality Participation Checklist Audit Tool**

The Blueprint for Building Quality Participation in Sport for Children, Youth, and Adults with a Disability, including the Quality Participation Checklist Audit Tool outlines key principles for quality participation and provides practical tools for developing inclusive sport programs. This initiative is supported by research evidence and aims to foster quality participation in sports for individuals with disabilities. The Blueprint is part of a suite of resources, including a supplemental report on evidence-based strategies for quality participation and quick guides for program leaders, all aimed at enhancing the sports experience for athletes with disabilities.

The Blueprint for Building Quality Participation in Sport for Children, Youth and Adults with A Disability define quality participation through the following principles:

- **Autonomy:** Having independency, choice, control
- **Belongingness:** Feeling included, accepted, respected, part of the group
- **Challenge:** Feeling appropriately tested
- **Engagement:** Being in-the-moment, focused, absorbed, fascinated
- **Mastery:** Feeling a sense of achievement, accomplishment, competence
- **Meaning:** Contributing toward obtaining a personal or socially meaningful goal; feeling sense of responsibility to others

### **Canadian Human Rights Charter (Section 15)**

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, part of the Canadian Constitution, includes provisions that protect individuals, including those with disabilities, from discrimination (**Section 15**). It ensures that all individuals are considered equal under the law, which means that governments cannot discriminate on various grounds, including physical or mental disability. The Charter also permits laws or programs that aim to improve the situation of disadvantaged individuals or groups, such as those with disabilities.

Additionally, the Canadian Human Rights Act of 1977 protects individuals from discrimination in employment or when receiving services from federal entities or federally regulated companies, prohibiting discrimination based on disability among other grounds. Employment rights for people with disabilities are further supported by the Employment Equity Act, which ensures fair treatment in the workplace, and the Policy on the Duty to Accommodate Persons with Disabilities in the Federal Public Service, which outlines the responsibility of employers to make accommodations for employees with disabilities.

### **Accessible Canada Act (2019)**

The **Accessible Canada Act**, enacted on July 11, 2019, aims to create a barrier-free Canada by January 1, 2040. It targets federal jurisdiction areas, including employment, built environments, information and communication technologies, and transportation, among others. The Act upholds principles of dignity, equal opportunity, full participation in society, and the involvement of persons with disabilities in the development of relevant laws and policies. Organizations must





prepare and update accessibility plans and establish feedback processes. Accessibility Standards Canada, created by the Act, develops, and recommends accessibility standards. The Accessibility Commissioner enforces the Act, with penalties for non-compliance, and individuals can file complaints related to accessibility. The Act will undergo periodic reviews, and National Access Ability Week celebrates the contributions of people with disabilities and promotes inclusion.

## Provincial

### **Pathways to Recreation, Parks, and Recreation Ontario (2014)**

The Pathways to Recreation initiative by Parks and Recreation Ontario includes comprehensive educational resources aimed at enhancing the accessibility of public spaces for persons with disabilities. One of the core resources is a guidebook that provides practical advice and interpretations of the Accessibility Standard for the Design of Public Spaces in Ontario. It acts as a supplementary tool for municipal and not-for-profit organizations managing parks and outdoor recreation amenities, offering insights into best practices for accessibility.

The guidebook's role is to facilitate the understanding and application of the standard, suggesting ways to modify spaces to be more inclusive. The accompanying webinar further helps by giving a visual and auditory presentation of the standards and recommended practices, expanding the reach, and understanding of the Standard's requirements. This initiative not only educates about legal compliance but also promotes inclusivity in community recreational spaces, thereby supporting the participation of persons with disabilities in public life and recreation.

### **The Ontario Human Rights Code**

The **Ontario Human Rights Code** protects individuals from discrimination and harassment due to past, present, and perceived disabilities. Disabilities encompass a wide range of conditions, including physical, mental, and learning disabilities, mental disorders, hearing or vision impairments, epilepsy, mental health disabilities, addictions, environmental sensitivities, among others. The Code's policies include the Policy on accessible education for students with disabilities, the Policy on drug and alcohol testing, the Policy on ableism and discrimination based on disability, and the Policy on preventing discrimination based on mental health disabilities and addictions. These policies aim to prevent discrimination and promote equal rights for persons with disabilities in various aspects of life.



## **The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2005)**

The **Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)**, enacted in 2005, is provincial legislation that mandates organizations to follow standards to increase accessibility for people with disabilities. The AODA covers a broad spectrum of disabilities, both visible and invisible, and aims for Ontario to be fully accessible by 2025. Under the AODA, organizations are required to develop accessibility policies, identify, and remove barriers, and make accessibility plans to improve access to goods, services, and facilities. The AODA's goal is to enable people with disabilities to contribute to the economy and society, ensuring they have equal opportunities to participate in all aspects of life in Ontario. The Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) under the AODA outlines five standards, including:

1. Information and Communications: Making information accessible in various formats.
2. Employment: Creating inclusive workplace policies and practices.
3. Transportation: Ensuring public transit is accessible.
4. Design of Public Spaces: Making public areas such as parks and buildings accessible.
5. Customer Service: Providing service that accommodates individuals with disabilities.

Organizations must document and publicly share their accessibility policies, set actionable goals within accessibility plans, and offer training to employees on serving persons with disabilities.

### **Use and Benefits of Local Government Recreation and Parks Services: An Ontario Perspective Research Summary (2009)**

The *Use and Benefits of Local Government Recreation and Parks Services: An Ontario Perspective* is a report publishing the findings of a provincial survey focused on public perceptions and attitudes towards parks and recreation services, providing insight into usage trends and the perceived value of these services. The report stated that residents challenged by disabilities reported reduced access and less benefits from public recreation and park services. Persons impacted with disabilities reported barriers to using parks and reported lower overall life satisfaction than households not challenged with a disability. The report highlighted that more work needs to be done in Ontario to ensure this group can benefit from recreation.



## Regional

### **York Region Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (2023 – 2027)**

The York Regional Multi-Year Accessibility Plan focuses on creating an inclusive and accessible environment for people with disabilities. This plan is not just a document; it represents an ongoing commitment and planned actions to remove barriers in services, including recreational opportunities. The Plan outlines a comprehensive strategy for meeting legislated AODA requirements, organizing objectives and actions under five distinct standards and general requirements specified in the Regulation. These standards encompass Information and Communications, Employment, Transportation, Design of Public Spaces, and Customer Service. Additionally, there are General Requirements that call for organizational enhancements to promote accessibility. Developed in consultation with various stakeholders, including people with disabilities and the York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee, the Plan incorporates continuous quality improvement actions to maintain accessibility standards.

### **York Inclusion Charter (2018)**

The Inclusion Charter for York Region is a community initiative that brings together businesses, community organizations, municipalities, police services, hospitals, school boards, conservation authorities and agencies with a common commitment to create an inclusive environment with equality for all who work, live, and play in the region. The Charter ensures York Region is a welcoming and inclusive community where diversity is celebrated and where everyone can develop to their full potential, participate freely in society, and live with respect, dignity, and freedom from discrimination. The Charter reflects an evolving approach in support of existing federal and provincial legislation that promotes human rights and accessibility.

### **York Region Language Guide (Updated in 2022)**

The York Region Inclusive Language Guide was developed to support the use of inclusive language in writing and conversation. Inclusive language refers to communication free of prejudicial terms, names, or phrases among people/groups of different backgrounds, languages, ethnicities, religions, ages, abilities and/or other identities. The guide includes guiding principles to follow to organizations communicate using inclusive language, and covers various inclusive language topics such as age, citizenship or immigration status, creed or religion, disability, gender, gender identity and gender expression, Indigenous peoples, low-income status, marital status and family status, mental health, race or ethnic background and sexual orientation. Topics are presented through a regional lens with key facts/data about our community.



### **York Region Social Capital Study (2018)**

The York Region Social Capital Study, commissioned by United Way Greater Toronto, highlights that social capital, which includes trusted networks and community connections, is strong in the York region. However, the report found that financial disparities exist, especially among persons with disabilities, who often have lower incomes and less financial security. As a result, persons with disabilities face greater barriers to accessing social capital. This may affect their recreational engagement, as community inclusion and support are crucial to accessing local services and recreational opportunities. The findings can guide efforts to create more inclusive recreational services that cater to the needs of all residents, including those with disabilities, by building trust, enhancing community support, and ensuring equitable access to services.

## **Local**

### **Town of Aurora Parks and Recreation Master Plan (2023)**

The Town of Aurora Master Plan highlights its commitment to making recreation inclusive to persons with disabilities by removing barriers and re-designing facilities and services to be more accessible and aligned with AODA requirements. The Plan outlines key actions, from barrier-free customer service training, to offering safe spaces for residents, to providing gender-neutral washrooms and more, and designing new and redeveloping facilities with accessibility features. The same commitment is expected for parks as they are built and redeveloped – many communities are beginning to incorporate spaces that directly benefit persons with disabilities, such as sensory gardens, quiet areas, raised garden beds, and autism-friendly playgrounds. The Plan speaks to broader focus on better engagement for under-represented populations in programming, which includes persons with disabilities, and includes recommendations to conduct a Recreation Needs Assessment for Persons with Disabilities and to focus staff training and community outreach on engraining under-represented populations to remove barriers and promote participating in activities and programming.

### **Service Delivery Review (2021)**

The Service Delivery Review (SDR) for the Town of Aurora, was designed to evaluate the needs and expectations of the community, the performance, and costs of services, and to result in recommendations for best practices and improved service delivery. The SDR aimed to inform the Town Council to continue providing services in a fiscally responsible manner, identifying opportunities for savings and efficiencies, potentially saving nearly \$1 million while maintaining high service levels. Key recommendations surrounding improvements to providing services to persons with disabilities include:

- More accessible engagement opportunities for those who cannot attend in-person town hall meetings.
- Accessible public Wi-Fi to increase digital inclusion.
- Snow removable for seniors and individuals with disabilities.
- Increase focus on diversity and inclusion within service delivery to better reflect the Town's changing demographics.
- An internal focus on hiring with a better inclusion and diversity lens within Corporate Services.





### **Town of Aurora Sport Plan (2016)**

The Town of Aurora Sport Plan is intended to build on current strengths and develop approaches to strengthen engagement in sport within the community. The Plan includes a priority recommendation to promote inclusivity for persons with disabilities to ensure these residents and their families have equitable access to sport, and to engage with agencies supporting persons with disabilities to understand their needs regarding inclusion in sports. Following this, a committee was formed by Sport Aurora in 2017 to create resources that would guide, support, and educate leaders and organizations to promote and offer more sport opportunities to individuals with disabilities. Sport Aurora has several virtual resources and webinars on how to increase inclusivity among programs and sport for persons with disabilities available on their [website](#).

### **Town of Aurora Official Plan (2010)**

The Official Plan of the Town of Aurora serves as a blueprint for long-term growth and development, outlining goals, objectives, and policies, including the social, economic, built, and natural environment priorities. The Plan is designed for residents through all stages of life, promoting a range of community services, amenities, and opportunities for active and healthy lifestyle choices that are accessible to everyone, including persons with disabilities. The Plan emphasizes the development of a complete community, which includes ensuring accessibility to all residents in compliance with the AODA. The Plan also outlines key accessibility policies, which state that all new developments be designed to facilitate accessibility and be integrated with public transit for persons with disabilities.

### **Town of Aurora Parks and Recreation Guides**

The Town of Aurora's Parks and Recreation Guide over the past two years has shown a strong commitment to supporting people with disabilities through a variety of programs and services. Today, the Town of Aurora's [Recreation and Program Guide](#) includes information about Inclusion Services and Adapted Programs, which are specifically designed to support individuals with disabilities and unique needs. These programs aim to provide equitable and meaningful access to recreation opportunities through specialized programming, individualized support, and accessible facilities. A more detailed description of the specific programs under Inclusion Services and Adapted Programs are included within this report under Section 4.2, and a complete list of all programs offered through the 2024 Winter Program Guide are included within **Appendix A** of this report. Some key highlights from the Program Guide include:

- **Inclusion Services:** The Town of Aurora provides specialized programming, individualized support options, and accessible facilities for people with disabilities or unique needs. They work closely with families and participants to create a successful, safe, and meaningful recreation experience for all.
- **Integrated Opportunities:** Participants with disabilities are encouraged to take part in year-round recreation programs that suit their interests and hobbies. There are options for external support, where individuals can attend a registered program with their own support person, and Town of Aurora Inclusion Staff, who can provide 1:1 support in mainstream recreational programs. Adapted programs offer specialized programs for participants with special needs, featuring smaller staff-to-participant ratios, modified instruction, and a more sensory-aware environment.



- **Virtual Adapted Programs:** The Town of Aurora offers virtual adapted programs that are specifically designed for participants with special needs. These programs encourage independence and comfort levels for participants and provide an opportunity for social interaction and skill development in a safe and supportive online environment.
- **Adapted Aquatic Options:** The Aquatics program offers three specific options for swimmers with disabilities: Adapted Privates, Inclusive Swim Lessons, and Aqua Buddies. Adapted Privates feature one-on-one instruction focusing on specific skills, Inclusive Swim Lessons offer group lessons with a one-to-one instructor-to-swimmer ratio, and Aqua Buddies pairs swimmers with volunteers for support during swim programs.

### **Town of Aurora Accessibility Plan (2022)**

The Town of Aurora's Accessibility Plan outlines the municipality's commitment to preventing and removing barriers for persons with disabilities and ensuring that people of all abilities have equal access to services and facilities. The Plan outlines the following priorities to improve accessibility:

- **General Requirements:** Ongoing updates to policies, procedures, and guidelines to reflect AODA requirements, with a focus on identifying and removing accessibility barriers.
- **Customer Service:** Continued provision of mandatory AODA training to staff and volunteers, ensuring accessible customer service.
- **Information and Communications:** Commitment to digital accessibility, ensuring accessible public communication and feedback processes.
- **Employment:** Ensuring an inclusive work environment with proper support and accommodations for employees with disabilities.
- **Transportation:** Collaboration to determine the need for accessible taxis and ensuring accessible public transportation services.
- **Design of Public Spaces:** Integration of accessibility standards into the design of public spaces, exceeding the minimum requirements where possible to facilitate universal access.

### **Town of Aurora Accessibility Design Standards (2022)**

The Town of Aurora's Accessibility Design Standards aim to create a universally accessible community, with the 2022 update including changes to reflect the latest Ontario Building Code and AODA standards. These standards are integral to the town's vision of inclusivity, ensuring that facilities are usable by all without the need for specialized design and are reviewed regularly to incorporate technological advancements and changing requirements. The Principles of Universal Design include:

- **Equitable Use:** Design is marketable and useful to people with diverse abilities.
- **Flexibility in Use:** Accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.
- **Simple and Intuitive Use:** Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of user's experience or skills.
- **Perceptible Information:** Design communicates necessary information effectively to the user.



- Tolerance for Error: Minimizes hazards and adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.
- Low Physical Effort: Can be used efficiently and comfortably, with minimal fatigue.
- Size and Space for Approach and Use: Provides appropriate size and space for approach, reach, manipulation, and use for all users.

### **Town of Aurora Strategic Plan (2011-2031)**

The Town of Aurora's Strategic Plan is the roadmap that identifies the town's future vision and direction and outlines how the town will achieve its vision through decision-making and action items. Aurora aspires to be an inclusive and family-oriented community that supports multi-generational programming in cultural and recreational activities. These activities are intended to meet the evolving and changing needs of the population, including promoting the benefits of recreation in supporting a healthy lifestyle at any age. The Strategic Plan recognizes that the town is aging and anticipates over the next 20 years, the number of people living with disabilities will increase. This will necessitate recreation options that are both accessible and inclusive.

### **Fee Assistance in Recreation (F.A.I.R) Access Policy**

The Town of Aurora's Fee Assistance in Recreation Access policy, known as F.A.I.R, is a program designed to provide financial assistance for recreation programs and memberships to residents of Aurora. The policy aids in making recreational activities more accessible to residents of different ages and income levels, including those with disabilities, by providing financial assistance to ensure equitable access. Key feature of the program include:

- Eligibility and Funding: Aurora residents qualify based on the Low-Income Measure (L.I.M.) as per Statistics Canada. Each eligible person can receive up to \$250 per year, and this applies to all family members individually.
- Application Process: Applications are required to be submitted annually with appropriate documentation to verify eligibility.
- Program Registration: Once funding is approved, residents can register for programs online or in-person at recreation facilities.
- Usage of Funds: The funds can be used for any recreation program or membership offered by the Town of Aurora, including swimming lessons, day camps, general interest programs, fitness programs, and drop-ins. However, the funds cannot be used for facility bookings and rental fees.

### **Town of Aurora Cultural Master Plan (2014-2019)**

The Town of Aurora's Cultural Master Plan includes a strategic focus on inclusivity, accessibility, and diverse cultural participation. By prioritizing the development and enhancement of accessible cultural facilities and programs, the plan recognizes the importance of integrating the needs of persons with disabilities into its cultural offerings, through event planning, marketing, communication, and tourism initiatives. The plan outlines the town's approach to ensure that cultural activities and events are more inclusive, enabling individuals with disabilities from diverse cultures to actively participate in and benefit from the town's rich cultural landscape. The plan supports the broader goals of enhancing community well-being and cultural engagement.



## Accessible Customer Service

The Town of Aurora's approach to accessible customer service is comprehensive and inclusive. Focusing on ensuring equal access and opportunities for persons with disabilities. Key aspects of the policy include:

- Under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), the Town of Aurora, like all public and private sector organizations in Ontario, is required to provide customer service that is accessible to people with disabilities. This includes ensuring that people with disabilities receive the same level of customer service as everyone else.
- Aurora has integrated some of its municipal facilities with the AccessNow app, which provides accessibility information to individuals with disabilities. This app helps users locate accessible facilities in their community, such as parking, entrances, and washrooms, self-empowering individuals with disabilities to make informed decisions about their movements and activities.
- The Town aims to create an inclusive environment with equality for all who work, live, and play in the area. This commitment is part of the broader vision of making York Region a welcoming and inclusive community where diversity is celebrated, and all individuals can participate freely and develop to their full potential.
- The Town ensures that training is provided on the requirements of the accessibility standards under the AODA, the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation, and the Human Rights Code as it pertains to persons with disabilities. This training is mandated for all employees, volunteers, policy developers, and other persons who provide goods, services, or facilities on behalf of the Town.





## Summary of Town Policies

Policy	Description	Relevance to Accessibility and Inclusion
<b>Town of Aurora Parks and Recreation Master Plan (2023)</b>	Committed to making recreation accessible by removing barriers and re-designing facilities to be accessible and inclusive, with gender-neutral washrooms and autism-friendly playgrounds.	Aligns with AODA to ensure recreational facilities are accessible for persons with disabilities.
<b>Service Delivery Review (2021)</b>	Evaluated community needs, service performance, and financial indicators, recommending improvements to accessibility services.	Suggests actions for enhanced digital inclusion and better service delivery for individuals with disabilities.
<b>Town of Aurora Sport Plan (2016)</b>	Aims to promote inclusivity in sports and engage with agencies to understand the needs regarding inclusion in sports for persons with disabilities.	Supports equitable access to sports and recreational activities for persons with disabilities.
<b>Town of Aurora Official Plan (2010)</b>	Serves as a blueprint for growth, emphasizing development that is accessible and integrated with public transit for people with disabilities.	Encourages the creation of a complete community with accessibility as a core principle.
<b>Recreation Program Guide, Inclusion Services and Adapted Programs (2023)</b>	Offers specialized programming and support for individuals with disabilities, ensuring safe and enjoyable recreation experiences.	Provides equitable access to recreation through adapted programs and individual support.
<b>Town of Aurora Accessibility Plan (2022)</b>	Outlines commitments to preventing and removing barriers, ensuring equal access to services and facilities for all abilities.	Sets priorities for improving accessibility across various domains, from transportation to public space design.
<b>Town of Aurora Accessibility Design Standards (2022)</b>	Updates standards to reflect Ontario Building Code and AODA, emphasizing universal design principles.	Guides the design of facilities to be accessible and usable by all, without the need for adaptation.



Policy	Description	Relevance to Accessibility and Inclusion
<b>Town of Aurora Strategic Plan (2011-2031)</b>	The Town of Auroras roadmap to achieving its vision and decision-making process	The Town of Aurora’s Strategic Plan envisions an inclusive and family-oriented community that anticipates and addresses the growing needs of an aging population with disabilities through accessible and inclusive recreational option
<b>Fee Assistance in Recreation (F.A.I.R) Access Policy</b>	Provides financial assistance for recreation to residents with different incomes and abilities.	Facilitates equitable access to recreational activities for those with financial constraints.
<b>Accessible Customer Service</b>	Ensures accessible customer service under AODA, includes training for employees and uses the AccessNow app for facility information.	Enhances customer service accessibility and supports an inclusive environment.
<b>Town of Aurora’s Cultural Master Plan (2014-2019)</b>	The Town of Aurora’s Cultural Master Plan includes a strategic focus on inclusivity, accessibility, and diverse cultural participation.	Guides the efforts and approaches to address specific cultural needs among persons with disabilities.
<b>Town of Aurora Parks and Recreation Guides</b>	Demonstrates commitment to inclusivity through various adapted programs, both in-person and virtual.	Provides numerous options for participation and support in recreational activities for people with disabilities