

Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

2027
TO
2031



PORT COLBORNE



Background: Accessibility and the Province of Ontario

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

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

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

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

Port Colborne wishes to thank its community partners, stakeholders and service partners in helping the City to achieve its accessibility goals.

Message from the Mayor

Port Colborne is a community that values inclusion, respect and the opportunity for everyone to participate fully. Ensuring our city is accessible to people of all abilities is an important part of building a place where everyone feels welcome and can take part.

Our 2027–2031 MYAP reflects the City’s continued commitment to identifying, preventing and removing barriers. It builds on the progress we have made while setting out priorities for the years ahead, from improving the accessibility of our facilities and public spaces to how we communicate, provide customer service and deliver programs and services.

The AODA provides an important foundation for this work. Equally important is listening to the people who experience barriers firsthand. The feedback received through the development of this Plan has helped us better understand where progress has been made, where challenges remain and where we should focus our efforts moving forward.

On behalf of City Council, I want to thank the residents, members of the ACC and City staff who contributed their time, experience and perspectives to this Plan. By continuing to listen, learn and make improvements, we can help ensure Port Colborne remains a community where everyone has the opportunity to participate and feel included.

Bill Steele

Mayor, City of Port Colborne

Message from the CAO

Accessibility is an important part of how we serve the community and how we operate as a municipal organization. It should be considered in the decisions we make, the services we provide, the information we share, the public spaces we maintain and the workplace we create for our employees.

The City's 2027–2031 MYAP establishes clear priorities for the next five years and reinforces our responsibilities under the AODA. It also challenges us to continue looking carefully at how we do our work, recognize barriers that may exist and identify practical opportunities for improvement.

That work takes many forms. Some improvements are physical and easy to see. Others come through better training, more accessible information, thoughtful customer service and a greater understanding of the different ways people experience our facilities, programs and services. The Plan also recognizes the importance of understanding disabilities that may not be immediately apparent and ensuring staff have the knowledge and tools to respond appropriately.

I want to thank our staff, the ACC and the members of the community who shared their perspectives through the development of this Plan.

Accessibility requires ongoing attention and shared responsibility across the organization, and we are committed to continuing this work and making meaningful improvements in how we serve Port Colborne.

Bryan Boles

Chief Administrative Officer, City of Port Colborne

General Requirements

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

What We Will Continue to Do

- Prepare and share publicly our MYAP outlining our commitment to accessible goods and services for citizens within the City of Port Colborne.

2027-2031 Goals

- Provide strong municipal guidance, direction and ownership to ensure accessibility is captured within the parameters of the City's business.
- Review accessibility policy, procurement policies and other related policies to ensure accessibility needs are addressed adequately.
- Provide annual updates on the implementation progress of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.
- Support the development of the AAC by reviewing the recruitment process to strengthen representation of a variety of disability experiences at the committee table.
- Provide immediate training for new hires and refresher training to existing staff and the AAC every 3 years on the AODA, the Ontario Human Rights Commission requirements, other Accessibility Standard requirements as necessary and the customer service experience.
- Source and provide additional training for staff on different disabilities, especially invisible disabilities such as neurodiversity, so that staff will gain a greater understanding of issues and accessibility barriers.
- Source and provide additional training for by-law enforcement officers on AODA requirements to ensure a more inclusive understanding of accessibility barriers.

- Source and provide additional training for development staff on AODA requirements and on different disabilities to ensure a more inclusive understanding of disability experiences and barriers.

Who is Responsible

- Human Resources
- Accessibility Consultant

Customer Service

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

What We Will Continue to Do

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

2027-2031 Goals

- Provide additional training on accessible customer service and invisible disabilities so that front line staff receive further awareness to better respond to the accessibility needs of the public. Customer service training refreshers for staff will emphasize the face-to face customer service needs.
- Improve the customer service experience by ensuring accessibility information is available by creating an Accessibility Guide. The guide would be useful to the public in finding accessibility features in the City and would be helpful to staff in addressing enquiries or customer service needs with accurate, up to date information.

- Provide an “additional support” option, that is not web-based, to allow people with disabilities with assistance in registering for programs and services so that registration can occur offline.

Who is Responsible

- Human Resources
- Accessibility Consultant

Information and Communication

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

What We Will Continue to Do

- Ensure web-based information is compliant with WCAG 2.2 Accessibility Standards, to Level AA.
- Provide alternate formats of City information upon request.
- Provide improvements to the website, especially keeping information current.
- The public library will:
 - Access to or arrange for accessible materials where they exist.
 - Provide information about the availability of accessible materials and provide this information in an accessible format upon request.
 - Provide accessible formats for archival materials, special collections, rare books and donations.

2027-2031 Goals

- Conduct an annual website audit to ensure City website is fully compliant with WCAG 2.2, Level AA.
- Increase awareness among staff, through training, on the barriers faced by people with disabilities in using the internet.
- Source and provide training on accessible content creation and website considerations.
- Ensure that City information is available beyond the website, including pamphlets, posters and other mailouts.

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

Who is Responsible

- Corporate Communications
- Accessibility Consultant

Employment Standards

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

What We Will Continue to Do

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

2027-2031 Goals

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

Who is Responsible

- Human Resources
- Accessibility Consultant

Transportation

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

While the transportation system is now managed by Niagara Region, the municipality will continue to work with the Niagara Region Transit to ensure the needs of Port Colborne and surrounding community citizens are met.

What We Will Continue to Do

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

2027-2031 Goals

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

Who is Responsible

- Clerks, Legislative staff/Human Resources
- Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee

Design of Public Spaces

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

What We Will Continue to Do

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

2027-2031 Goals

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

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

Who is Responsible

- Public Works staff
- Library staff
- Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee
- Accessibility Consultant

Conclusion

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

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

Public and Staff Consultation Report for the Development of the MYAP 2027-2031

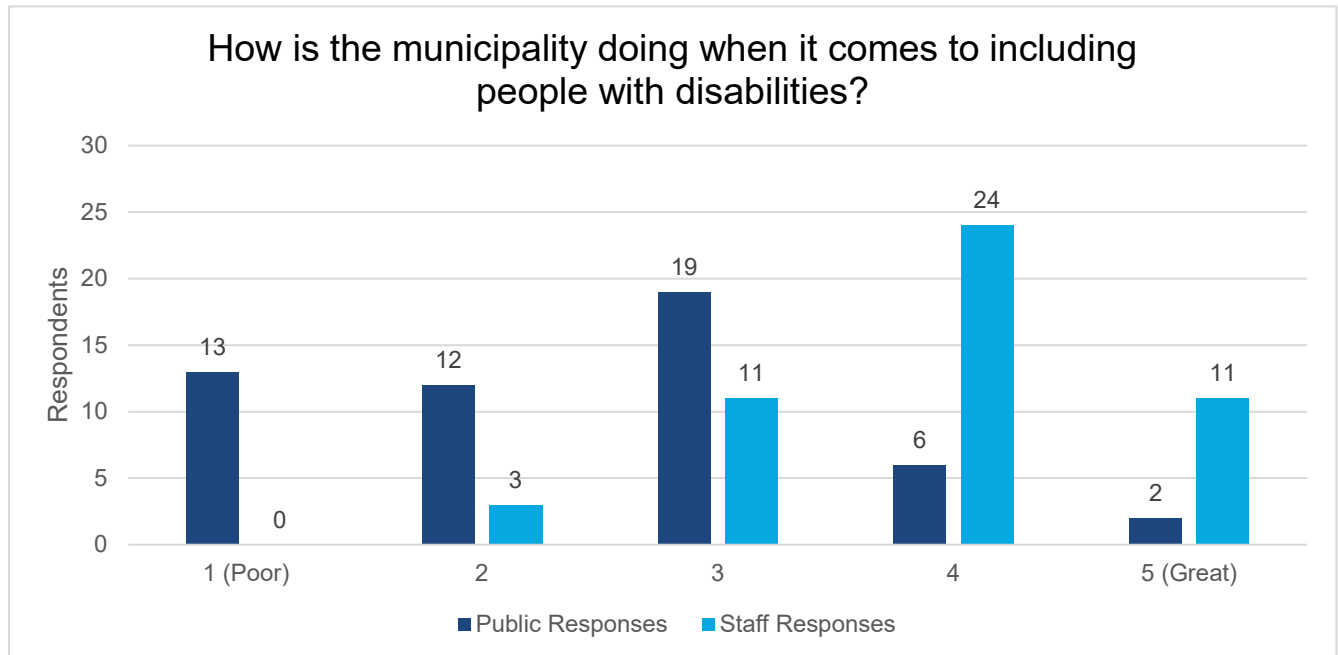
Background: Consultation Report for MYAP 2027-2031

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

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

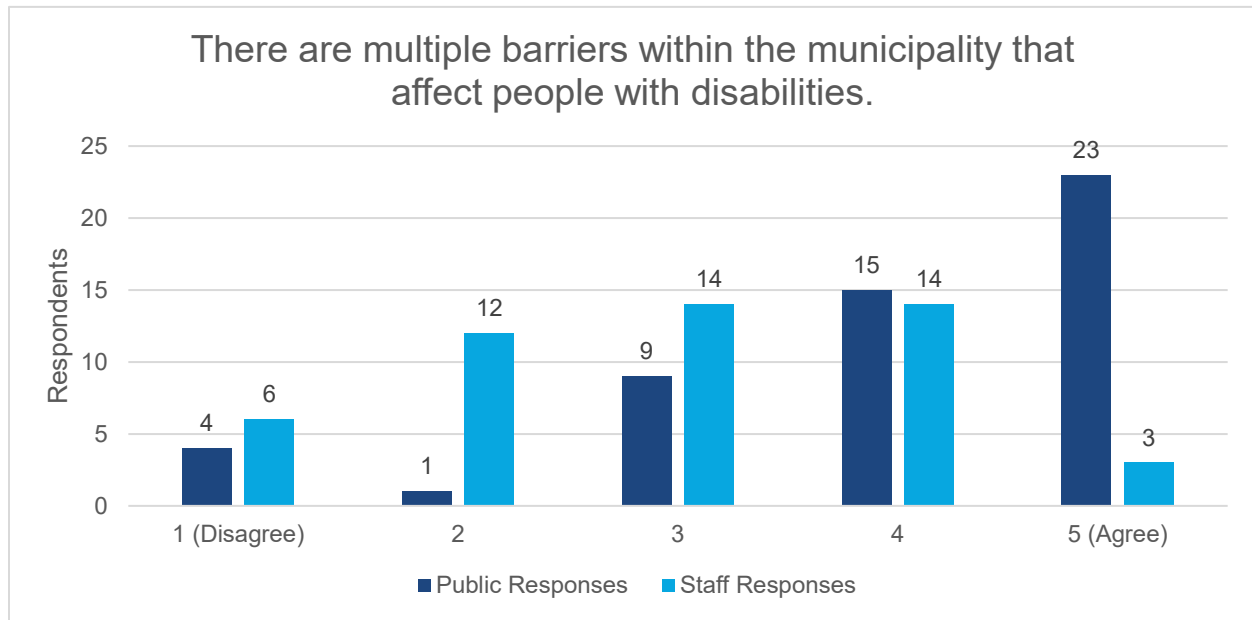
The consultation allowed for the development of trends and themes across the Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee catchment area of Lincoln, West Lincoln, Pelham, Thorold, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Grimsby and Port Colborne.

Question #1: How is the municipality doing when it comes to including people with disabilities?



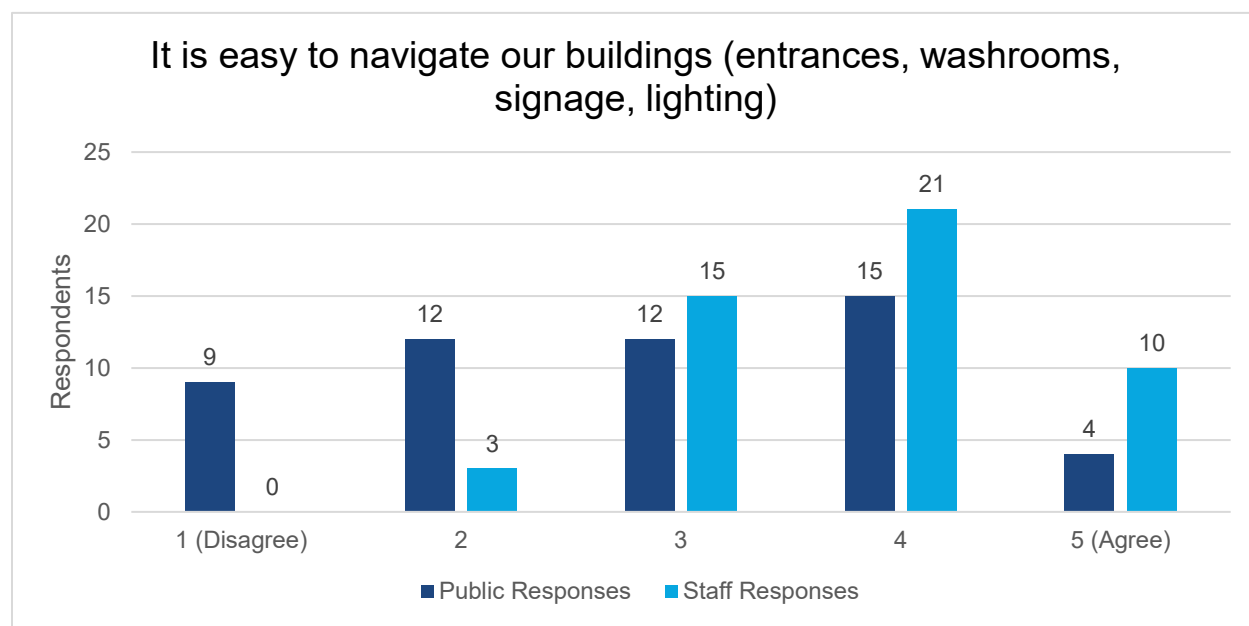
The results show a notable difference between public and staff perceptions of the municipality's efforts to include people with disabilities. Public responses were more mixed and generally lower, with 3 out of 5 the most common rating. In comparison, staff responses were considerably more positive, with most staff rating the municipality a 4 or 5. This highlights a gap between how inclusion efforts are perceived internally and by the broader community.

Question #2: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? There are multiple barriers within the municipality that affect people with disabilities.



Responses indicate that both the public and staff recognize there are multiple barriers within the municipality that affect people with disabilities, although public respondents were more likely to strongly agree. Nearly two-thirds of public respondents rated the statement a 4 or 5, compared with approximately one-third of staff. Overall, the results suggest a difference in how accessibility barriers are perceived by the public compared with municipal staff.

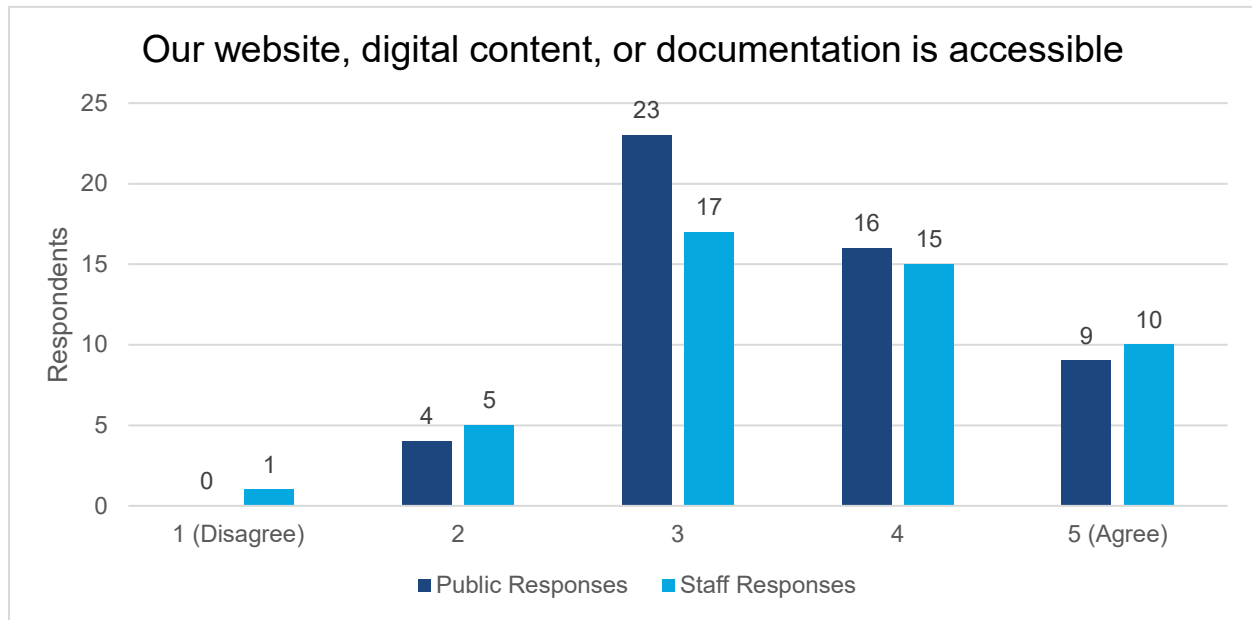
Question #3: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? It is easy to navigate our buildings (entrances, washrooms, signage, lighting)



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

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

Question #4: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Our website, digital content, or documentation is accessible.



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

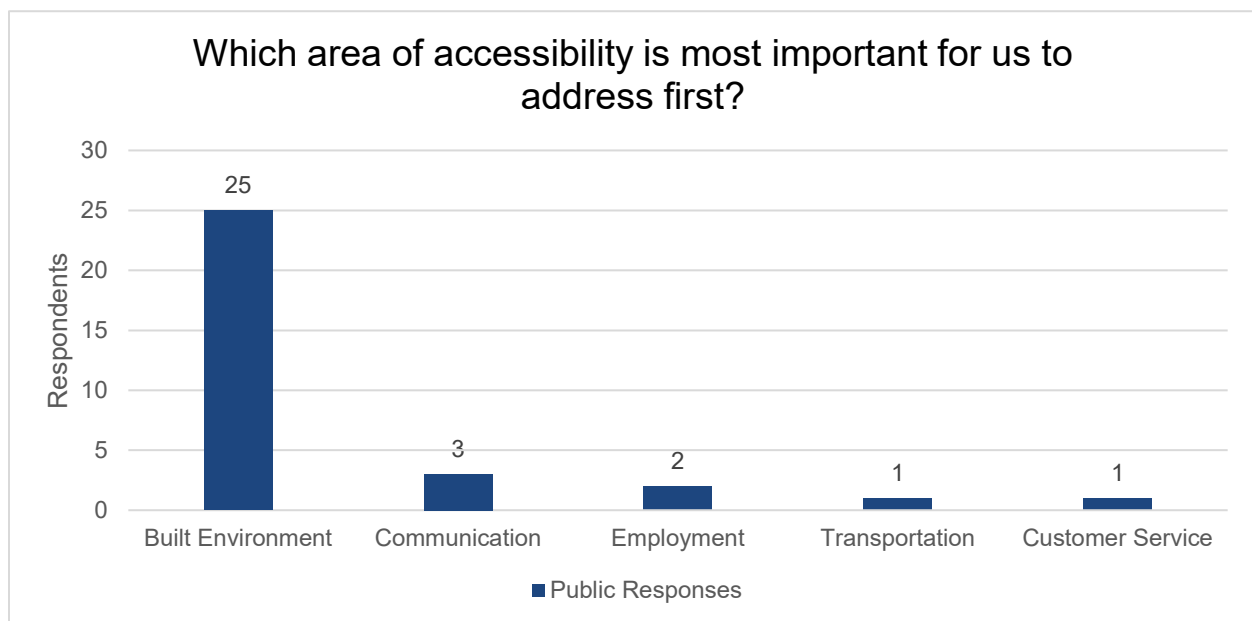
Question #5: Are you aware of any attitudinal barriers in our policies, programs, or services?

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

Question #6: Do you have suggestions for improving accessibility across our facilities, programs, or services?

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

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



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

Conclusion

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

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