



Accessibility

Multi-Year Accessibility Plan: 2019-2022

Inclusive Programs, Services and Spaces for All

This plan was created by Township of Southgate staff in consultation with the Grey County Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee. The Plan is available in alternate formats upon request such as print, electronic, plain text and verbal. Other formats may be considered on a case-by-case basis. Additionally, communication supports are also available upon request.

This multi-year plan is available online at www.southgate.ca

For more information about Southgate's Accessibility initiatives, please contact the Clerk's Department at 519-923-2110, clerks@southgate.ca or in person at:

Township of Southgate
185667 Grey County Road 9
Dundalk, ON N0C 1B0

Township of Southgate's Commitment to Accessibility

The Township of Southgate strives at all times to provide its goods and services in a way that respects the dignity and independence of all people. Southgate Township is also committed to giving people with disabilities the same opportunity to access our goods and services and allowing them to benefit from the same services, in the same place and in a similar way as other customers.

A Background on Accessibility at Southgate

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)

The AODA sets a roadmap for an accessible Ontario by 2025. This is to be achieved through mandatory standards that public, private and not-for-profit organizations need to meet. Southgate needs to meet the deadlines and requirements of the small public sector organization description under the act.

AODA Standards include:

- Customer Service
- Information and Communication
- Employment
- Transportation
- Design of Public Spaces

In addition to the requirements under the Design of Public Spaces Standard, Southgate must follow the Ontario Building Code (OBC). The OBC was recently updated to improve barrier-free design and to ensure indoor spaces of buildings are accessible.

Consultation

Under the AODA, Southgate is sometimes required to consult with individuals, persons with disabilities and a municipal Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee (JAAC). Southgate is committed to working with these persons and its JAAC to ensure legislation is met.

Implementation

Accessibility is an important element of providing excellence in government service and aligns with Southgate's Strategic Plan. Providing accessible and inclusive programs and services is part of Southgate's culture for customer service. Southgate supports the Province's goals of making Ontario accessible by 2025 and will work within its means to meet all requirements of accessibility legislation and to eliminate barriers in our services and workplaces. These include barriers that are: physical, attitudinal, systemic, communication, and technological.

Structure

Members of the Clerk's Department oversees compliance reporting as well as participates on the JAAC; however, all staff and departments have a role to play in the implementation of this plan and in ensuring the programs, services and materials Southgate offers meet accessibility

legislation. The JAAC reports to Grey County's Committee of the Whole. The JAAC provides an advisory role and final decisions are the responsibility of Southgate Council.

What is a Disability?

Under the AODA, a "disability" is defined as:

- any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement;
- a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability;
- a learning disability or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language;
- a mental disorder;
- or, an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety & Insurance Act, 1997.

This broad definition includes disabilities of different sensitivity, visible as well as non- visible disabilities, and disabilities which may be temporary or have effects that come and go over time.

Barriers

This multi-year plan will help Southgate strategize ways to identify, address and prevent barriers that limit persons with a disability from fully participating in our programs and services.

Barriers are obstacles that prevent someone with a disability from doing a day-to-day activity that many people take for granted. The traditional definition of a barrier has been expanded beyond physical obstructions. There are several other categories of barriers to consider. These include:

Physical Barrier: Buildings, public spaces or features that restrict or impede physical access. Example: a doorway that is too narrow to accommodate a person in a motorized scooter.

Communication Barrier: An obstacle that prevents the transfer, processing or interpreting of information. Example: a print brochure with text too small to read, or a document written in a way that is too complicated to understand.

Attitudinal Barrier: Prejudgments and assumptions that directly or indirectly discriminate against persons with disabilities. Example: assuming all visually impaired persons can read Braille or treating a support person as if they are your client.

Technological Barrier: When technology cannot or is not modified to support various assistive devices and/or software. Example: a website that doesn't provide for increased text sizes.

Systemic Barrier: Policies, practices and procedures that do not consider accessibility.
Example: requiring a valid driver's license for a position prevents a person with visual impairment from applying for the job.

Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee

The Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee advises Southgate Council and staff members, on ways to identify, prevent and remove barriers for persons with disabilities in municipal services, programs and spaces. The committee meets approximately four times per year plus additional meetings and consultation as required.

Our Progress on the AODA Regulations

The following pages outline our accomplishments and our commitments in meeting the accessibility standards in five key areas: Customer Service, Information and Communication, Employment, Transportation and Design of Public Spaces.

There are also general requirements that apply across all the accessibility standards.

General Requirements

Procurement: People with disabilities will be treated equitably with respect to the procurement, use and benefit of municipal services, programs, goods and facilities in a manner that respects their dignity, independence, and integration. This commitment extends to residents, employees, visitors and other stakeholders with visible and non- visible disabilities. Furthermore, the Municipality will ensure that accessibility is integrated into all municipal initiatives, business practices, boards, committees and departments. Where it is not practicable to incorporate accessibility criteria and features into the procurement of goods, services or facilities, an explanation will be provided, upon request.

Reporting: Reports will be shared with Southgate Council on the progress and implementation of this multi-year accessibility plan and this information will be posted on www.southgate.ca and will be available in alternate formats upon request. Following the initial two-year plan, the multi- year accessibility plan will continue to be updated once every five years, with other updates made throughout the term as required. Reports will be filed bi-annually with the Accessibility Directorate.

Minutes of the Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee will be provided to Council.

Training: All Southgate's employees and volunteers receive mandatory accessibility training. Everyone will receive general training on accessibility which will include legislation, requirements (AODA and Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation, Human Rights Code) and customer service training. Staff will also receive necessary job-specific training to ensure their day-to-day work is accessible. Staff and department heads will have the responsibility of staying up to date with changes within their designated fields (example: a web developer taking

WCAG training). Staff in the Clerk's Department are available to provide additional support as needed.

All new staff joining Southgate receive accessibility training during orientation. Additional job-specific training is provided on a case-by-case basis as necessary. For example, all staff who will create documents for the Township will receive accessible document training.

2019-2022 Goals:

1. Improvements can be made to better identify which staff receive job-specific training and to identify more opportunities for staff development.

Feedback

Southgate is always open to suggestions about ways to improve accessibility of our programs and services. The public is encouraged to share their comments by contacting us in person at the address below, by calling 519-923-2110, emailing clerks@southgate.ca or by mail to:

Township of Southgate
Attention: Clerk's Department
185667 Grey County Road 9
Dundalk, ON N0C 1B0

Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR)

Accessible Customer Service Standard

Our commitment:

Continue to provide staff with the training they need to provide high- quality accessible service to people of all abilities who access Southgate’s programs and services. To design and provide programs and services that consider accessibility and respect the dignity and independence of the people we serve.

Progress:

Southgate trains all new employees on accessibility and the Accessible Customer Service Standard as part of orientation. Major renovations to public facilities are designed with accessibility in mind. Southgate continues to listen to feedback to find ways to improve the accessibility of our programs and services.

2019-2022 Goals:

1. Provide refresher training to staff about accessible customer service.

Information and Communication Standard

Our commitment:

Southgate is committed to providing information and communications about our programs and services in an accessible manner to people of all abilities.

Progress:

All public documents are made electronically accessible to the best of our ability. Where necessary, documents can be made available upon request at no expense to the requestor. Southgate’s website is designed to the WCAG 2.0. Southgate is also committed to producing information in plain language.

2019-2022 Goals:

1. Arrange opportunities for plain language training for staff on an annual basis.
2. Web development staff continue to stay informed of WCAG regulations and attend training opportunities.
3. Ensure all digital media, such as videos produced by Southgate are fully accessible.

Employment Standard

Our commitment:

Southgate is an equal opportunity employer providing inclusive and accessible recruitment and employment practices.

Progress:

Southgate continues to meet the requirements of the Employment Standard. Accommodation is available at all points in the recruitment process at the request of the applicant. Southgate works with staff with disabilities to develop accommodation plans.

2019-2022 Goals:

1. Develop a review process for new job postings to ensure they are free of systemic barriers.
2. Ensure Human Resources staff remain informed of any updates to the Employment Standard and policies are kept up to date.

Transportation Standard

Our commitment:

If Southgate begins providing public transportation services, the Township is committed to providing accessible services that meet all provincial legislation.

Progress:

Southgate does not currently provide a public transportation program, nor does it license taxicabs as regulated under the Transportation Standard.

Design of Public Spaces

Our Commitment:

Southgate will strive to ensure that public properties and facilities meet the requirements of the Design of Public Spaces standard as well as the Ontario Building Code.

Progress:

Southgate continues to design public spaces with accessibility in mind and refers designs and drawings to the Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee for input and advice.

2019-2022 Goals:

1. Ensure new structures are built with accessibility in mind and continue consulting with the JAAC about new builds.
2. Consider implementing other accessibility improvements as recommended by the JAAC or members of the public.

Ongoing Review of this Plan

Ongoing review and feedback are important for this plan to stay effective. Southgate will continue to collect feedback and implement changes that will enhance the accessibility of its services. Members of the public are encouraged to make comments on this plan and accessibility matters in general.

Additionally, this plan will be reviewed by Clerk's Department staff members and annual status reports will be provided to the Grey County Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee and Southgate Council.