

# Accessibility Planning, Ongoing Review & Status Report



<b>Accessibility Plan</b>	<b>July 2023 – 2028</b>
<b>Next Review Planned</b>	<b>July 2028</b>

## **BACKGROUND**

Stewart Homes, along with other organizations providing services in Ontario, must follow [The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act](#) (AODA) 2005, in order to reduce and remove barriers for people with disabilities so that Ontario can become more accessible and inclusive for everyone. [Regulation 191/11: Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation](#) (IASR), created under the AODA, sets accessibility standards which are rules that must be followed so that people with disabilities would have more opportunities to participate in everyday life. The accessibility standards from the IASR include the following:

<b>Information and communication</b>	Organizations are required to create, provide and receive information and communications that are accessible for people with disabilities.
<b>Employment</b>	Employers are required to make their workplace and employment practices accessible to potential and current employees with disabilities.
<b>Transportation</b>	Transportation service providers are required to have features and equipment on vehicles, routes and services offered that is accessible to people with disabilities.
<b>Design of public spaces</b>	All newly constructed or redeveloped public spaces must be accessible for people with disabilities.
<b>Customer service</b>	Barriers must be removed so people with disabilities can access goods, services, and/or facilities.

Stewart Homes must also comply with the [Ontario Human Rights Code](#) (the Code) respecting non-discrimination. The IASR does not replace requirements under the Code and other laws relating to the accommodation of people with disabilities.

## **MULTI-YEAR PLAN**

The IASR requires Stewart Homes to:

- Establish, implement, maintain and document a multi-year accessibility plan
- Post the multi-year accessibility plan publicly and provide the plan in an accessible format upon request
- Review and update the accessibility plan at least once every five years

The purpose of the multi-year accessibility plan is to outline our strategy to prevent and remove barriers for people with disabilities and how we will meet the requirements under the IASR.

The current plan covers a five-year period 2023-2028.

### **Stewart Homes Commitment**

Stewart Homes is committed to fulfilling its requirement under the IASR and its accessibility policies. Since 1978, has strived to promote dignity, individuality, independence, personal growth and community inclusion for people who have physical, developmental and other disabilities.

This multi-year accessibility plan outlines the steps Stewart Homes will be taking and timelines within the next 5 years. The plan is built on our accomplishments since the introduction of the first multi-year plan in 2013. This multi-year accessibility plan will put into action Stewart Homes ongoing commitment to accessibility for our residents, our staff and all other stakeholders.

### **A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:**

**Accessibility is ingrained in our culture and is a key value in guiding our operations. Our staff's historical and ongoing commitment to promoting inclusion for the individuals served by Stewart Homes and in the broader Developmental Services sector is a great source of pride for our agency.**

**Stewart Homes has a long history of demonstrating our commitment to accessibility through the purpose-building and significant retrofitting of our residences to be highly accessible for people with various physical and developmental disabilities. These programs have features that include grade level buildings, automatic snow removal from walkways, automatic door openers, wide hallways, protected walls and moldings, roll-in showers, large roomy bathrooms with adjustable height change tables and ceiling tracks and lifts in many of our common areas and bedrooms. Two of our newest homes feature wheelchair accessible kitchen access. We are committed to the continuous quality improvement of our service and in this regard we routinely make accessibility improvements to our homes, our training, and our policies as the needs of the people we serve change, and as we learn.**

**Beyond providing essential support, an accessible home is more than shelter; it becomes a community for those who live in it, effectively addressing the crisis of isolation. In essence, it is the realization of our commitment to accessibility and inclusion. Stewart Homes strives to be a place to belong.**

**Kim Erskine,**

**Executive Director**

### **PROCESS**

Stewart Homes Accessibility Committee is responsible for leading our efforts to identify, prevent and remove barriers for people with disabilities. This committee will continue to engage with Stewart Homes stakeholders to ensure initiatives as set out in the plan enhances accessibility needs in the areas of communications, employment, services and facilities.

Developing this multi-year plan involved the following:

- Assessment of the organization (i.e. operations, design of facilities, customer service)
- Reviewing feedback from service users, employees and other stakeholders
- Determining goals to increase accessibility
- Anticipating future barriers

## **GENERAL REQUIREMENTS**

### **ESTABLISHMENT OF ACCESSIBILITY POLICIES**

Stewart Homes is committed to maintaining AODA/IASR policies and to meeting the accessibility needs of people with disabilities in a timely manner.

#### **Past achievement:**

- An AODA policy was first developed and approved in September 2012.
- The Policy was later updated and retitled to include requirements of the IASR becoming our Accessibility Policy.
- Stewart Homes has remained in compliance with the Customer Service Standards
- The Accessibility Policy continues to be made publicly available and provided in an accessible format upon request.

#### **Strategies and actions planned:**

- Review the Accessibility policy annually
- Continue to make the Accessibility policy publicly available and readily available in an accessible format

### **ACCESSIBILITY PLANS**

Stewart Homes is committed to meeting its requirement under the IASR to establish, implement, maintain and document a multi-year accessibility plan.

#### **Past achievement:**

- A multi-year accessibility plan was first developed in December 2013

#### **Strategies and actions planned:**

- Continue to implement strategies outlined in this multi-year accessibility plan
- Review multi-year accessibility plans yearly
- Continue to post plan publicly and make available in accessible formats upon request

### **Procurement of Goods, Services and Facilities**

Stewart Homes will strive to incorporate accessibility criteria and features into our purchasing practices so that services and facilities are more accessible to our stakeholders with disabilities, unless it is not practicable to do so.

**Past achievement:**

- Stewart Homes has a long history of making accessibility design, criteria and features for residents and staff a key priority when retrofitting and purpose building its homes.

**Strategies and actions planned:**

- Continue to incorporate accessibility design, criteria and features so that goods, services and facilities are more accessible
- Continue to seek and review feedback from our residents, staff and other stakeholders in this area

**TRAINING**

Stewart Homes is committed to providing training on the requirements of Ontario's accessibility laws and the Ontario Human Rights Code as it pertains to people with disabilities.

**Past achievement:**

- Provided training on the requirements in the IASR and the disability-related obligations under the Ontario Human Rights Code to all employees, students working at Stewart Homes
- Stewart Homes continues to provide training as appropriate to the role and duties, on the requirements of the accessibility standards as soon as practicable

**Strategies and actions planned:**

- Training will continue to be provided to ensure that employees perform the duties of their jobs
- Training will continue be provided when there are any changes to the Accessibility policies
- Stewart Homes will continue to keep training records including dates that the training was provided

## **ACCESSIBILITY STANDARDS**

**INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS**

Stewart Homes is committed to creating, providing and receiving information and communications in ways that are accessible for people with disabilities.

**Past achievement:**

Stewart Homes has remained in compliance with the Information and Communications Standards. This includes the following:

- Implementation of an accessible feedback process and making accessible formats and communication supports available upon request or as needed
- Provision of information regarding Stewart Homes services and facilities in accessible formats and communication supports available upon request or as needed
- Stewart Homes has no public emergency procedures or safety plans. Provision of emergency procedures, plans or safety

**Strategies and actions planned:**

- Continue to remain in compliance with the Information and Communication Standards
- Continue to meet request in a timely manner and at no additional cost to the person making the request
- Continue to notify all employees, students, service users, visitors and the public about the availability of accessible formats and communication supports
- Continue to take into account the person's accessibility needs when providing communication supports
- Revision of brochures to be in a format that is easily made accessible

## Accessibility Planning and Ongoing Review

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information can be made available for residents or staff and their visitors in accessible format or with appropriate communication supports if needed.

- Stewart Homes current website has undergone some changes to improve accessibility including adding changeable font sizes in all areas of the website possible, and high contrast colours.
- Work and research had begun to replace the website starting in January of 2020 and was paused due to the substantial disruption of our service. While the website was not fully accessible, Stewart Homes continued to make the information contained on our website available in accessible formats, upon request, including being available to discuss our service by telephone, in person or by email and sharing of written information.

and eliminate any that can't be changed.

- Stewart Homes website requires a total replacement/redesign in order to conform fully with the World Wide Web Consortium Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0. Level AA. Research into this began in early 2020 with a goal of meeting the compliance deadline and was delayed while Stewart Homes redeployed most key staff to assist with managing our operations during the Covid-19 pandemic. Given the vulnerable population we serve, the impact on our agency was substantial through early 2023. Stewart Homes is currently recovering from this considerable disruption to our operations. In 2023 Stewart Homes will focus on it's effort to recover from the impact of the pandemic and a return to more normal operation of its service. Full compliance with World Wide Web Consortium Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0. Level AA is a critical priority for Stewart Homes with a target of completion in December of 2024.

## EMPLOYMENT

Stewart Homes is committed to fair and accessible employment practices.

### **Past achievement:**

Stewart Homes has remained in compliance with the Employment Standards. This includes the following:

- Notification to all employees and the potential candidates about the availability of hiring process-related accommodations for applicants with disabilities upon request
- Notification to successful applicants with disabilities, of Stewart Homes policies for employment-related accommodations when making offer of employment
- Providing information that is needed in order to perform the employee's job

### **Strategies and actions planned:**

- Continue to remain in compliance with the Employment Standards
- Continue to integrate accessibility into regular workplace processes
- Continue train and coach those responsible for managing and supervision of staff on accessibility policies and their job-related duties

and information that is generally available to all employees, in accessible formats and communication supports for any employees making the request

- Implementation of a process for individualized workplace emergency response information to employees with disabilities
- Implementation of a formal process for the development and documentation of individual accommodation plans for employees with disabilities
- Implementation of a formal process for return to work for employees who have been absent from work due to disability and require disability-related accommodations in order to return to work
- Stewart Homes continues to take into account the accessibility needs of employees

## **TRANSPORTATION**

While this standard is not applicable at Stewart Homes, Stewart Homes is committed to ensuring that its transportation services are accessible to the people we serve as possible.

### **Past achievement:**

- Stewart Homes has acquired a fleet of accessible vehicles to provide transportation options for individuals living in residential programs
- Stewart Homes has consistently sought out new purpose built and retrofit vehicles routinely, to keep the age of its fleet low, ensuring accessible and safe transportation is readily available for our residents, to ensure access to their communities.

### **Strategies and actions planned:**

- Continue to provide training to employees driving Stewart Homes vehicles on the safe use of accessibility equipment and features as well as emergency preparedness and response procedures for the safety of persons with disabilities.
- Continue to look for and proactively purchase accessible vehicles of various types to ensure that the total age of the fleet is relatively low so ensure residents access to their communities isn't reduced due to lack of available, safe vehicles.

## **DESIGN OF PUBLIC SPACES**

Stewart Homes will meet accessibility laws when building or making major changes to public spaces, if applicable. Stewart homes strives to make its communal, outdoor spaces and entrances more accessible.

### **Past achievement:**

- Stewart Homes has not created any new public spaces and its homes are not open to the public.

### **Strategies and actions planned:**

- Continue to make public and communal spaces more accessible
- Continue to ensure procedures are in place for preventative and emergency maintenance of the accessible elements in public spaces and for dealing with temporary disruptions when accessible elements are not in working order.

## **CUSTOMER SERVICE**

Stewart Homes is committed to providing accessible customer service to people with disabilities.

### **Past achievement:**

Stewart Homes has remained in compliance with the Customer Service Standards. This involves the following:

- Providing services in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities
- Service animals, assistive devices and support persons are permitted at our premises
- Posting notification when accessible services are temporarily unavailable
- Providing training on how to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disabilities
- Providing training of how to use and properly maintain equipment or assistive devices

### **Strategies and actions planned:**

- Continue to remain in compliance with the Employment Standards
- Continue to integrate accessibility into regular workplace processes
- Continue train and coach those responsible for managing and supervision of staff on accessibility policies and their job-related duties

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

For more information on this accessibility plan and Stewart Homes' efforts at meeting the AODA, please contact:

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Accessible formats of this Plan can be made available upon request. The plan is posted at our head office as well as on our website.