



THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF AMHERSTBURG

OFFICE OF THE CAO

MISSION STATEMENT: *Committed to delivering cost-effective and efficient services for the residents of the Town of Amherstburg with a view to improve and enhance their quality of life.*

Author's Name: Kevin Fox / Karly Kennedy	Report Date: September 7, 2023
Author's Phone: 519 736 0012 ext. 2272 / 2232	Date to Council: September 25, 2023
Author's E-mail: kfox@amherstburg.ca / kkennedy@amherstburg.ca	Resolution #:

To: Mayor and Members of Town Council

Subject: Amherstburg Accessibility Advisory Committee Achievements in 2022 and Updates to Multi-Year Plan

1. **RECOMMENDATION:**

It is recommended that:

1. That the report of September 25, 2023 entitled Amherstburg Accessibility Advisory Committee Achievements in 2022 and Updates to Multi-Year Plan **BE RECEIVED for information.**

2. **BACKGROUND:**

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) provides that municipalities must establish an Accessibility Advisory Committee. As per the AODA and the Committee's current approved Terms of Reference, the Committee shall advise Council on specific matters. These matters include:

- Advise Council of the requirements and implementation of accessibility standards and the preparation of accessibility reports;
- Review in a timely manner the site plans and drawings described in Section 41 of the Planning Act;
- Preparation, implementation and monitoring of effectiveness of the Town's annual Accessibility Plan;
- Review and comment on the accessibility of buildings, parks and other Town facilities;
- Identify, research and collaborate on Town accessibility initiatives as they relate to new and existing Municipal by-laws; and;

- Identify research and collaborate on the Town accessibility initiatives as they relate to purchasing goods and services for the Town and goods and services provided by the Town or agents providing services under contract with the Town.

3. DISCUSSION:

The end of the 2018-2022 term and the subsequent municipal elections necessitated the commencement of a new committee for the 2022-2026 term of Council. Consequently, work plans did face a temporary disruption in 2022. The Amherstburg Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAAC) was recruited and commenced early in 2022 though and the work plan to effectively address the evolving priorities and goals of the incoming council and ensure the continued advancement of accessibility initiatives has re-commenced.

Below is a summary of the accessibility initiatives achieved in 2022:

Inclusive Community Program Needs Assessment

In 2020, the Town of Amherstburg applied for funding to the Province of Ontario for \$60,000 under the Inclusive Community Grant Program (ICGP). The project consisted of 2 Phases: an initial “Needs Assessment” to identify the needs, wants and desires of older adults and person with disabilities, and; development of an “Action Plan”. On March 9, 2021, the Town was advised that the ICGP application had been successful for funding with the project to be completed by March 31, 2022.

The ICP Needs Assessment was overseen by a community-based Advisory Steering Committee consisted of a membership where 50% hailed from the Accessibility Advisory Committee. The Advisory Steering Committee, in coordination with Administration, identified relevant information for guidelines on age-friendly communities, leading practices from other local communities, provincial planning and policy, and Amherstburg’s strategic documentation, plans, policies and reports. A comprehensive survey questionnaire was designed and implemented during the summer, extending into December 2021, to acquire information on community inclusivity needs from the public and service providers.

This engagement process resulted in a comprehensive Needs Assessment that considers the WHO 8 Domains of Community Life, as noted in their Age-Friendly Cities Framework:

1. Outdoor Spaces and Buildings
2. Transportation
3. Housing
4. Communication and Information
5. Social Participation
6. Civic Participation and Employment
7. Community Support and Health Services
8. Respect and Social Inclusion

The Steering Committee used the relevant supporting information and survey findings to identify recommendations for the Action Plan which are closely linked to the Town's processes and plans already planned and underway.

Here is how the Amherstburg Accessibility Advisory Committee's influenced the Action Plan in 2022:

1. Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

The Committee evaluated and endorsed opportunities for age-friendly and accessible design options by reviewing proposed park, recreational and new development site plans. Ongoing feedback on the sidewalk upgrades and maintenance (i.e. Victoria Street South corridor) was also provided by the Committee in accordance with the recommendation to, "Evaluate opportunities for improvements to the connectivity and/or safety along active transportation, trail and pedestrian corridors." The Committee's concerns were integrated into future project plans and the Committee continues to provide critical feedback in 2023.

2. Transportation

In September 2022, the Town of Amherstburg launched a public transit service in partnership with Transit Windsor as part of a two-year pilot project. As part of this pilot program implementation, the Committee participated in a visit to Windsor Transit to assess accessibility accommodations and to enable review/commentary on the transit program. The ICP Needs Assessment and Action Report highlighted this with the recommendation to, "Review options available for a Public Transit Pilot Project to enhance the affordable transportation options available to older adults and people with disabilities. This should be done with due consideration given to integration into a wider Regional Transit Network to maximize potential connectivity and access provision while ensuring affordability."

3. Social & Civic Participation

Based on the needs identified through the Inclusive Community Program (ICP) Needs Assessment, the Senior Expo was re-established for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic to support the continued investment and enhancement of new and existing accessible programming.

Other Initiatives

(a) Building Audits

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disability Act has set the goal of a fully accessible Ontario by 2025. In order to meet this standard, the Committee audits

municipal properties. As a result of the audits, resources were allocated for the provision of accessibility upgrades at both the Community Hub and the Gibson Gallery. Upgrades included accessible sidewalks, ramp access, automatic door openers, signage and relocation of accessible parking spaces to ensure barrier free access.

(b) Taxi Cab Pilot Project

The Amherstburg Accessibility Advisory Committee met on several occasions during the 2018-2022 term to discuss the proportion of accessible on demand taxis and means of realistically achieving that goal. On March 9, 2020 Council concurred with the recommendation of Administration and the Amherstburg Accessibility Committee that Licensing and By-Law Enforcement investigate a means of providing a higher proportion of accessible on-demand taxis in the Town of Amherstburg. On December 12, 2022, Council resolved that funding be considered for the Accessible On-Demand Taxi Pilot Project during the 2023 budget deliberation in the form of a grant program. The request for funding for the Pilot was approved and is planned for Q1 of 2024. This approach will provide a means by which a company is incentivized to meet the Town's stated goals around the proportion of accessible on-demand taxis.

(c) Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

Municipalities are required to adopt accessibility plans in accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). In 2021 Council Adopted the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. This plan is built upon a strategy of continual improvement and feedback over the course of the next five years, with a series of annual engagements. While such an approach is not required by legislation (once every five years is required), it was envisioned that this annual communication could allow for my routine and regular paths of communication for members of the community and offer an opportunity to revisit the goals and objectives of the Multi-Year Plan so that they reflect the changes and growth experienced, year over year. Phase Two of public consultation on Year 1 of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan took place in the summer of 2022 and was featured as a project initiative on the Town's public engagement platform, Talk the Burg, in addition to printed surveys, public distribution points, social media and stakeholder engagement. The printed copies of the survey that were disseminated at Town Hall and the Libro Centre were collected and added to the results. As part of the Stakeholder Engagement process, communications were sent specifically to service providers such as Community Living Essex County, Harmony-in-Action, Assisted Living Southwestern Ontario and Amherstburg Community Services to share with their patrons, clients and caregivers, as well as other interested parties. A Phase 3 is planned for Q4 2023 and will have a similar engagement methodology utilized and target engagements based upon identified priorities.

(d) Municipal Election Accessibility Plan

In accordance with the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001*, and the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, the Clerk is authorized to establish procedures and provide appropriate measures to ensure the persons with disabilities have the opportunity to participate fully in Municipal Elections. In 2022, the Municipal Election Accessibility Plan was developed by the Town's Election Team in consultation with the Accessibility Advisory Committee.

The plan was developed to be consistent with the core principles of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)* and to identify, prevent and remove access barriers so that persons with disabilities can fully participate in the electoral process. Advanced Voting Places and the Voting Place (Libro Center) were equipped with Vote Tabulators with Ballot Marking Devices, which permit the independent casting of Ballots. Additionally, home visit options for those who could not attend voting places were made available and free transportation via accessible vehicles were also arranged courtesy of Amherstburg Community Service. The feedback received from individuals who made use of the home visit option were very positive and the use of this option as a preferred alternative has increased, as the positive feedback from 2018 led to increased awareness of the availability of this option for the 2022 election by new and returning electors.

The election plan demonstrated remarkable effectiveness in ensuring the accessibility of the municipal election process. The committee's input on strategies resulted in an election that was truly inclusive and open to all eligible citizens. The success of this plan paves the way for future elections to prioritize inclusivity and equal participation for every member of the community.

(e) Remediation Software

The Committee continues to provide feedback with regards to the obligations of the Information and Communication Standards of *the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) O. Reg 191/11* under *the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*. In 2022 the Town secured an additional software solution to assist in the remediation of PDF documentation, supplementing other service solutions.

Objectives for 2023

While the Accessibility Advisory Committee will continue to support ICP Needs Assessment and Action Plan, and, the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan initiatives in 2023, the Town continues to be available to respond to and act upon concerns raised which are not already part of these priorities. For example, public feedback has been received which has requested the installation of accessible door openers for the Field House washrooms at the Libro Centre. Once completed, the recommendation of the Accessibility Committee will be provided to Council and is likely to request the use of funds from the Accessibility Compliance Reserve Fund.

Additionally, the Committee will continue works associated with its regular activities such as parkland redevelopment review, site plan analysis and feedback, annual consultation activities on the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and education and outreach activities. For example, the National Accessibility Week observations and the Annual Accessibility Parking Blitz continue to promote greater understanding of and education on the importance of Accessibility and Inclusion in our community.

4. RISK ANALYSIS:

There are no risks inherent in the acceptance of this report for informational purposes.

5. FINANCIAL MATTERS:

There are no financial implications related to the recommendation in this report, however, it should be noted that Council is likely to see increased requests for use of the associated reserve fund (Accessibility Compliance Reserve Fund) created for the express purpose of addressing compliance issues and reducing or removing barriers to accessibility, as the Town continues to work towards continual improvement.

The pre-commitment made by Council during the 2023 budget deliberations to allot an additional \$25,000 in the 2024 base budget towards the Accessibility Compliance Reserve Fund is a significant step forward, although any opportunities to continue to move funds into this reserve fund should be sought so that it remains available to reduce or remove barriers that may be encountered.

The Town will continue to explore grant and partnership activities to reduce or remove barriers and increase the accessibility and inclusion provided in the community. It should be noted that the Town has had success in this realm based upon the activities of community advocates. Of special note in this area, the Town has twice been the recipient of Enabling Accessibility Fund Grant in recent years under the Youth Innovation Component based upon the advocacy of Bo O'Rourke-Caton, an identified Youth Accessibility Leader (YAL) under this program and local resident. It may be advisable to provide for special recognition of the outstanding achievements in this realm by Mr. O'Rourke-Caton by Council as an example of the power of change leaders in our community.

6. CONSULTATIONS:

N/A

7. CONCLUSION:

In 2022, the municipal election rightfully occupied a significant portion of the time available for meetings to occur, however, this did not deter the Committee or the Town from continuing to advance the objectives of accessibility and inclusion. In 2023, the AAAC will continue their dedicated work towards realizing the multi-year accessibility plan, thereby fostering a more inclusive and equitable community. Given the

significance of such work for the community, Council should look for any opportunities to continue to provide funding to replenish or grow the Accessibility Compliance Reserve Fund so that it remains available for larger projects and initiatives designed to tackle more complex issues encountered.



Kevin Fox
Clerk / Risk Manager



Karly Kennedy
Policy and Committee Coordinator

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	Amherstburg Accessibility Advisory Committee Achievements in 2022 and Updates to Multi-Year Plan.docx
Attachments:	- 2021 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.pdf - ICP Needs Assessment and Action Plan.pdf
Final Approval Date:	Sep 11, 2023

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:



Tracy Prince

**No Signature - Task assigned to Valerie Critchley was completed by assistant
Melissa Osborne**

Valerie Critchley



Kevin Fox