

Wolfville: Access by Design

An Accessibility Plan for 2019-2022



Working to provide access for all.



Contents

Welcome Message	2
Introduction	4
Built Environment	8
Information and Communications	13
Employment	16
Goods and Services	19
Transportation	22
Implementing the Plan	25
Appendices	27

For important terms, check out
“What the Words Mean (Glossary of Terms)” on page 6.



Welcome

On behalf of the Town of Wolfville's Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC), and the Town's staff members, I invite you to read the Town's first Accessibility Plan. Nova Scotia is the third province in Canada that has adopted an accessibility law. Wolfville was selected by the Province to be the first town to create an accessibility plan. This plan is meant to serve as an example for other communities in the province. The Town created the Committee in order to receive guidance in writing the accessibility plan and organizing actions to improve accessibility. In accordance with section 44 (2) of the Accessibility Act, "At least one half of the members of an accessibility advisory committee must be persons with disabilities or representatives from organizations representing persons with disabilities." Wolfville's Committee meets this requirement.

Our plan, *Wolfville: Access by Design*, is the result of the collaboration of the Town of Wolfville, the Accessibility Advisory Committee, the Nova Scotia Accessibility Directorate within the Department of Justice, and members of the public. Members of the public were invited to provide input regarding their areas of concern about accessibility in Wolfville. We asked for comments and concerns at community meetings, including a well-attended priority-setting session at the Farmers' Market. Members of the public were also invited to provide feedback online, and attend Committee meetings that included time for their questions and comments. During meetings, Committee members provided input to Town staff members on setting priorities for accessibility. In turn, staff members from both the Town and the Nova Scotia Accessibility Directorate wrote several versions of the plan, according to input they received from the public and the Committee.

The plan reflects the goal of the Town to be responsive to the needs of people with various abilities. Wolfville strives to be a welcoming, inclusive, and accepting community to all people. With this aim in mind, I encourage you to view the Accessibility Plan as a “living document,” and to suggest changes to it that will continually improve it. Although the plan must be updated every three years, please voice your concerns, questions, and suggestions at any time, since the Accessibility Advisory Committee, the Town of Wolfville, and the Nova Scotia Accessibility Directorate rely on your invaluable input. I cordially invite you to attend our meetings, as well as to contact the Town’s Accessibility Coordinator.

For Committee members, serving on the Committee has been an opportunity for engagement, learning, and growth, and we are grateful for it. We are proud of the Town’s Accessibility Plan, and look forward to seeing it put into practice.

Agnieszka Hayes

*Chair, Accessibility Advisory Committee
Town of Wolfville*

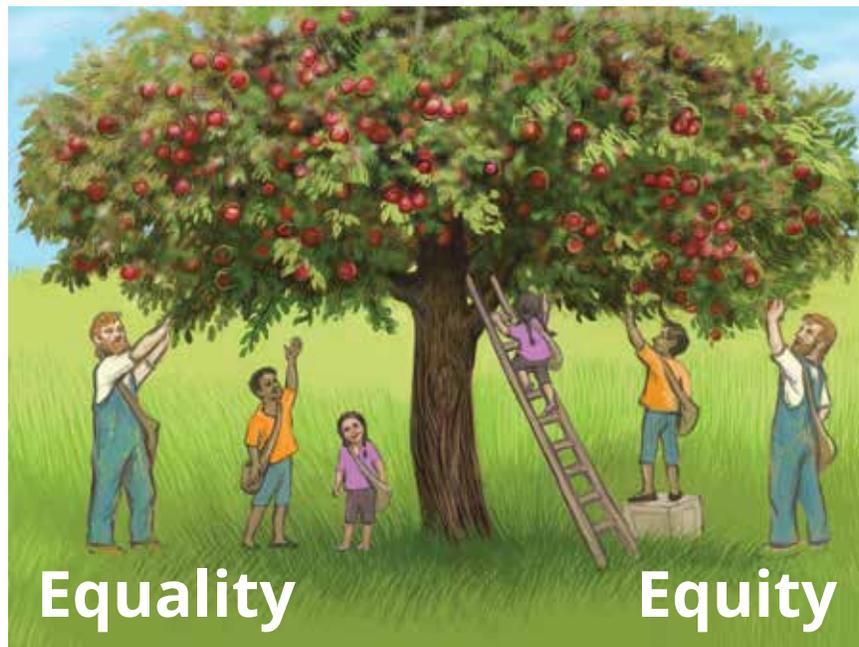


What We Believe

The Town of Wolfville is committed to ensuring equitable access to community life and participation in society for all people, regardless of their abilities. We are committed to helping all people maintain their dignity and independence. We believe in inclusion.

Equitable access is different from equal access. Equality means everybody gets the same thing; equity means everybody is treated fairly, based on their needs and abilities (Figure 1).

Figure 1.



We are committed to meeting the needs of people who face barriers to accessibility. We will do this by identifying, removing, and preventing these barriers and by meeting the requirements of Nova Scotia's Accessibility Act.

Areas of Focus

Our plan includes five areas of focus (Figure 2).



Figure 2.

What the Words Mean (Glossary of Terms)

AAC: Accessibility Advisory Committee.

Appeal: Make a formal request to clarify or change a decision.

ASL: American Sign Language.

Auditory: Related to hearing or sensing sound.

Barrier: Something that makes it harder for some people to participate. Nova Scotia's Accessibility Act defines a barrier as "anything that hinders or challenges the full and effective participation in society of persons with disabilities, including a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, an information or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy or a practice."

Braille: A reading and writing system for people who are visually impaired.

CART: Communication Access Realtime Translation.

CSA: Canadian Standards Association.

Density bonusing: (Also called "incentive zoning" or "bonus zoning") A way for developers and municipalities to negotiate changes to zoning rules. For example, the municipality might allow the developer to include less parking in exchange for benefits to the public, such as public art, parks, or accessibility improvements.

Disability: A condition that makes it harder for a person to participate. The condition may always interfere, or only sometimes. Nova Scotia's Accessibility Act defines disability as "a physical, mental, intellectual, learning or sensory impairment, including an episodic disability, that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders an individual's full and effective participation in society."

EMO: Emergency Management Office.

Equitable/equity: A commitment to fairness. Equitable access is different from equal access. Equality means everybody is treated the same; equity means everybody is treated fairly, based on their needs and abilities.

Infrastructure: The "underlying structure" that makes a place liveable and keeps its systems working (e.g., roads, sewers, clean water, electricity, and more).

NSFM: Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities.

Pedestrian: A person walking outside or using an assistive device outside to travel at a walking speed.

Plain language: Language a reader or listener can understand easily and completely.

Retrofit: To add features that were not included in the original design.

RHF: Rick Hansen Foundation.

RHFAC: Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification. (Learn more at www.rickhansen.com/become-accessible/rating-certification.)

Tactile: Related to the sense of touch.

WCAG: Web Content Accessibility Guidelines. (Learn more at www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag.)



Built Environment

Our Commitment

Our public buildings and public spaces will be accessible to people of all ages and abilities, whether we own, lease, or operate the space. We will also encourage citizens, the business community, and Acadia University to make other public and private spaces accessible.

Our Starting Point

Overview

The Town of Wolfville owns, leases, and operates public facilities such as Town Hall, Rotary Park, many sidewalks, parking areas, and a wide variety of other buildings, parks, and infrastructure (basic structures and systems that help the Town run smoothly).

Achievements

- Reservoir Park and Harvest Moon Trail have been improved to include areas that are more accessible.
- Sidewalk rebuilding is included in the 10-year capital investment plan, and sidewalk repairs now have more attention in the Operations Plan.
- The Town bought additional equipment to speed up snow removal.
- The customer service counter in Town Hall is a height that is wheelchair accessible.
- Town Hall is barrier free on the first floor.

Barriers

- Some sidewalks and walkways are uneven.
- Some entryways to public and private buildings are narrow.

- Some public open spaces—such as the Mona Parsons Statue, Quiet Park, and the Rail Trail—are not accessible to people with mobility challenges.
- Some public washrooms are not fully accessible to people of all ages and abilities.
- Accessible parking is limited.
- Some ramps are steep and do not have a mid-ramp landing—for example at Town Hall.
- There are not enough signs for people with visual and hearing impairments.
- Cars and pedestrian traffic compete for street priority and snow clearance.
- Sidewalk snow clearing does not always meet accessibility requirements.
- It can be very expensive to update (retrofit) existing buildings to make them more accessible.
- Accessibility projects compete with other budget demands, including essential services such as water and sewer services.



Mona Parsons Statue

Policies

For Public Spaces

The Town of Wolfville will...

- By 2021, ensure that all or most municipal facilities meet the Accessibility requirements (Schedule “C”) in the latest version of the Nova Scotia Building Code Regulation. For facilities not completed by that date, have a plan in place to complete the work by 2025.
- Ensure that all new municipal buildings (including major renovations) meet the Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification (RHFAC) Gold Standard.
- Provide basic access for people of all ages and abilities to public buildings, public washrooms, and at public parks with a natural slope of less than 5 percent (e.g., parts of Reservoir Park; Harvest Moon Trail; Quiet Park; parts of Willow Park, etc.).
- Ensure sidewalks and curb cuts within the Core area are improved and maintained, as soon as possible, to the standard outlined in Canadian Standards Association (CSA) B651-18, Accessible Design for the Built Environment.
- Provide accessible parking locations, and associated curb cuts, spread throughout the Core Area.
- Provide crosswalks and curb-cuts in areas where there are many pedestrians, such as near schools and parks.

For Community Partnerships

The Town of Wolfville will...

- Encourage private developers to have their existing buildings RHFAC-certified and for new developments to meet the RHFAC Gold Standard.
- Offer density bonusing (negotiated changes to zoning rules) to private developers who meet the Rick Hansen Gold Standards within the Core Area.

- Regard Rick Hansen Accessibility Certification as a “public benefit” under the Density Bonus Program.
- Work with the Wolfville business community, including the Wolfville Business Development Corporation, to promote Wolfville as an accessible community.
- Encourage seniors to “age in place” through alternative housing options, such as “granny-flats”, co-housing, senior shared housing with students, etc.

Actions

Top Priorities (2019-2022)

- Add sidewalk curb cuts at all intersections where sidewalks exist.
- Commit a portion of the annual budget to install, maintain, or improve accessibility in public buildings and spaces.
- Ensure all pedestrian buttons or light controls, such as those at intersections or pedestrian controlled crosswalks, are located over a flat area.
- Place street furniture, sandwich boards and sidewalk planters away from the path of travel and set back from curb cuts and sidewalks so that people can move freely.
- Widen doorways and install power door buttons or automated sliding doors at the entrance of municipal buildings and public washrooms.
- Town staff to review and bring forward to Council recommendations (with related capital and operating costs) to improve the standard timelines for snow removal on sidewalks.
- Put auditory, visual, and tactile markers at busy intersections where people cross the road—for example, within the Core Area and near schools and parks.

Other Priorities

- Ensure the Council Chambers meet CSA Accessibility requirements by March 31, 2020. This includes providing a mid-ramp landing to improve access to the first floor at Town Hall.
- Ensure service desks are an accessible height, including in the Community Development and Public Works building.
- Work with library partners, such as Annapolis Valley Regional Library, to ensure library collections are more accessible.
- For renovations to private buildings that aim to meet the Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification, fast track the approval and waive the development fee.
- For new developments that aim to achieve Rick Hansen Accessibility Certification, consider:
 - deducting the cost of certification from development fees, and
 - fast tracking these applications through the development approval process.
- Promote the province's Small Business ACCESS-Ability Grant Program to the Wolfville Business Community, including the Wolfville Business Development Corporation.
- Consider changing Land Use Bylaws to make it easier for homeowners and landowners to:
 - add a secondary suite (e.g., an apartment unit) or a backyard suite
 - create co-housing (a community that includes private living space and shared space).
- Encourage aging-in-place housing options in the municipal planning strategy and zoning by-laws.



Information and Communications

Our Commitment

Information and communications delivered by the Town of Wolfville will be clear and accessible for people of all ages and abilities. We will take steps so people understand accessibility and barriers to participation, and will increase awareness about the accessibility rights of people of all ages and abilities.

Our Starting Point

Overview

The Town delivers information to the public in many ways, including:

- meetings of Town Council and Advisory Committees, which are open to the public
- email, the Town's website, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and other forms of social media
- kiosks (display structures) to promote events and special town meetings
- public awareness campaigns

Achievements

- Meetings are generally held at Town Hall, where the first floor is barrier free.
- When meetings are not held at Town Hall, a wheelchair-accessible space is booked, whenever possible.
- Agendas and minutes of all meetings are posted on the Town website.

Information and Communications

- People can listen to or watch Town Council meetings live on the Internet during the meeting. (Town Council meetings are streamed on Facebook Live. This new initiative will improve as technical issues are resolved.) After the meeting, people can listen to or watch an archived copy on the Town's website.
- The Emergency Management Office (EMO) Coordinator has worked with seniors and seniors' housing to develop a contact list for use in the event of an emergency.

Barriers

- Many people do not know that others face barriers to accessibility.
- There is currently no process for hearing-impaired individuals to attend or participate in public meetings, including meetings of Town Council and Advisory Committees.
- The Town's website is not accessible to people with visual impairments.
- Staff are generally not trained to promote inclusion in communications.
- "Plain language" is not consistently used in written material.
- The Municipal Government Act sets limitations for certain public notices—for example, advertisements must be published in newspapers, which may not be accessible to people with visual impairments.
- Streaming video and related technologies do not always work as intended.

Policies

The Town of Wolfville will...

- On request, provide information in an accessible format, or with communication supports that consider a person's specific needs. Build a campaign to promote this service to the public.

- Ensure the Town's digital presence (e.g., website and social media) and Information Technology systems are designed for people of all ages and abilities.
- Hold all in-person public meetings in barrier-free locations.
- Train front-line staff in better ways to communicate with people of all ages and abilities, and to provide information in an accessible format.

Actions

Top Priorities (2019-2022)

- Train relevant staff in plain language and inclusive communications.
- Develop and implement a public awareness program (for Town staff and the public) to build awareness around barriers to accessibility and what an accessible community means.
- Provide modified editions of key municipal resources—in large print and/or in plain language—on request. Examples include recreation guides, emergency management information, and bylaw services.
- Ensure digital communications, including emergency alerts, are screen-readable. Encourage partner agencies to achieve the same standard of communication.

Other Priorities

- By 2021, ensure the Town's web presence meets the latest Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG).
- Provide American Sign Language (ASL) and/or Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) services at Town Council and other Town-hosted public meetings, on request.
- Include braille on all employee business cards.
- Work with the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities (NSFM) to advocate for accessibility to be included in the public notice requirements of the Municipal Government Act.

Information and Communications

- Issue meeting agendas with enough lead time to review and book communication accommodations, if needed.
- Ensure the public have enough notice to give feedback and participate in discussions before Town Council makes a decision.



Employment

Our Commitment

We will remove barriers to employment for people of all ages and abilities who seek a career with the Town of Wolfville. Our workforce will reflect the Town's diverse population. We will make our employment practices and workplaces more accessible for new and existing employees of all ages and abilities.

Our Starting Point

Overview

The Town employs 42 permanent employees. There are 7 elected representatives on Town Council, including the mayor. Elected representatives must be Canadian citizens, at least 18 years old, and live in the community. The Council may appoint other members of the public to serve on committees or task forces.

Achievements

- Members of Council receive iPads for reading agendas and Town documents. This makes reading more accessible because users can zoom in on text and change the font size.
- Town Hall is barrier free on the first floor.
- The Council table is generally wheelchair accessible.
- The Public Works/Community Development building is wheelchair accessible on the first floor.

Barriers

- The second floor is not wheelchair accessible in all Town-owned buildings.

Employment

- Staff, including senior management, are generally not trained to recognize barriers that may limit job opportunities for qualified individuals.
- Jobs are posted in traditional ways, including web pages, which may not be accessible to some individuals.
- Because the Town does not have a Human Resources Department, there are few ways to help staff who have individual needs.

Policies

The Town of Wolfville will...

- Offer accommodation during recruitment, if needed.
- Offer accommodation to employees of all ages and abilities. This includes providing assistive devices so that employees can succeed at their jobs.
- Track the number of employees with disabilities, with the aim of reflecting the Town's diversity by 2020.
- Work with Town employees to build an understanding of the value of accessibility and inclusion.

Actions

Top Priorities (2019-2022)

- Update the employee training manual to include a section on respecting diversity. This will include training in working with people of all ages and abilities. All town employees will be required to take the Working with Abilities online training provided free by the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission (workwithabilitiesns.ca).
- Establish a centralized accommodation fund to pay for assistive devices or accommodations employees need to succeed at their jobs. Promote this fund on the job posting.

Other Priorities

- Survey the municipal workforce to get baseline data on the ages and abilities of employees.
- Produce annual diversity reports, including trends and analysis about people with varying abilities.
- Share opportunities for accessibility training with residents and local businesses—online or in person with Town of Wolfville staff training.
- Investigate strategies to reach a wider and more diverse audience with job postings. Include statements in the job postings to ensure applicants are aware that accommodation can be provided.
- Assign a designated staff person to help individuals who may need assistance to succeed at their jobs.



Goods and Services

Our Commitment

We will ensure that people of all ages and abilities have equitable access to goods and services delivered by the Town of Wolfville. This includes ensuring that there are policies, procedures, and tools to promote the accessible delivery of goods and services.

Our Starting Point

Overview

Following are some of the many services the Town of Wolfville delivers to the public:

- handling meetings of Town Council and Advisory Committees
- overseeing communication to the public (see Information and Communication section)
- providing Customer Service counters
- maintaining streets, including sidewalk snow removal (see Built Environment section)
- maintaining parks, trails, and open spaces, including playgrounds, and a Visitor Information Centre (see Built Environment section)
- maintaining water and sewer services
- providing emergency services, such as police and fire

Achievements

- The customer service counter in Town Hall is at a height that is wheelchair accessible.

- The Visitor Information Centre has no steps, and so it is partially wheelchair accessible.

Barriers

- Although the Visitor Information Centre is built at ground level, it is not fully accessible. For example, it does not have an automatic door opener and does not have an accessible washroom.
- Although the Recreation Centre at Rotary Park is built at ground level, it is not fully accessible. For example, there are no automatic door openers, some doors are too narrow, and the ramp to the program room is inappropriate.
- No staff members are trained in alternative communication methods, such as American Sign Language (ASL).
- No resources or funds are designated to offer alternative communications to people who need them (for example, a sign language interpreter).
- The Town's website is not accessible to people with visual impairments.

Policy

The Town of Wolfville will deliver all goods and services without bias. No resident shall be denied a service because of a disability.

Actions

Top Priorities (2019-2022)

- Ensure public parks can be enjoyed by people of all ages and abilities.
- Create an accessible playground at Willow Park.
- Improve snow clearance.
- Provide an adapted listing of recreation programs and services for people of all ages and abilities, and update it annually.

Goods and Services

- Train the staff who are responsible for delivering accessible services to people with diverse abilities.

Other Priorities

- Waive the entrance fees at leisure activities for individuals whose role is to support a person with a disability.
- Establish an accommodation fund to provide services for residents who need accommodation, such as Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) and American Sign Language (ASL).
- Provide sign language interpreters, on request, to enable people to participate in recreation and library programs.
- Provide accessible exercise equipment at municipal recreational facilities.
- Provide accessibility training to the Town's Building Inspector, through the RHFAC training offered by Nova Scotia Community College.
- Where applicable, include an "Accessibility Lens"/Impact Analysis in reports to council and in consultant reports delivered to staff and council.



Transportation

Our Commitment

We will ensure that people of all ages and abilities have equitable access to publicly funded and/or regulated transportation services. These currently include Kings Transit Authority, Kings Point to Point, and taxi services.

Our Starting Point

Overview

Kings Transit Authority operates 13 buses from Weymouth to Hants Border, with service extending to Cornwallis Park, Upper Clements Park, and Port Williams.

Kings Point-to-Point Transit (KPPT) provides a door-to-door accessible public transportation service for all residents of Central and Eastern Kings County. KPPT operates a fleet of 8 vehicles, including an 18-passenger minibus. All vehicles are accessible.

The Town of Wolfville licenses 16 taxis.

Achievements

All Kings Transit Authority buses are equipped with the following:

- Global Positioning System (GPS) and Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL), using DoubleMap. These features enable passengers to get up-to-the-minute estimates of bus arrival times, by phone or Internet.

Transportation

- Automatic Voice Annunciation (AVA) Technology to announce the next stop for passengers with visual impairments
- low-floor kneeling capabilities and electric ramps
- priority seating

All of the Kings Point-to-Point vehicles are accessible.

Barriers

There are currently no accessible taxis operating in Wolfville. Kings Point-to-Point Transit must be booked at least 24 hours in advance.

Policies

The Town of Wolfville will...

- Ensure that no resident is denied transit or taxi service because of a disability.
- Ensure that no resident is charged an additional fee for transit or taxi service because of a disability.

Actions

Top Priorities (2019-2022)

- Town staff to work with Kings Transit staff to review snow removal at transit stops and steps (including costs) required to improve snow removal timelines
- Ensure all transit stops are designed to meet or exceed Canadian Standards Association (CSAA) Standard B651-18, Accessible Design for the Built Environment.

Other Priorities

- Explore subsidized transit fares and/or transit passes for people with disabilities and/or low income.
- Ensure training is available for operators and drivers of public transportation.

- Ensure accessible taxi service is available to the public by doing the following:
 - a) Consult with the Accessibility Advisory Committee and the public to determine how many on-demand accessible taxis are needed.
 - b) Demonstrate progress toward meeting that need.
 - c) Ensure that no one is charged additional fees or is charged a fee to store their mobility aids or mobility assistive devices.
 - d) Ensure that the vehicle registration is visible and available in accessible formats for passengers of all ages and abilities.



Implementing the Plan

Responsibilities

- Town Council is responsible for adopting and overseeing *Wolfville: Access by Design*.
- The Chief Administrative Officer is responsible for implementing the plan and assigning an Accessibility Coordinator.
- The Accessibility Coordinator is responsible for receiving and responding to public concerns, complaints, and suggestions.
- The Accessibility Advisory Committee is responsible for giving feedback and recommendations to the Town Council.

Schedule

All Top Priorities in this plan will be implemented by March 31, 2022 (the end of the fiscal year). Other priorities will be implemented by 2030.

Monitoring

- The Wolfville Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) will prepare an Access by Design Report Card for council by March 31 of each year (the end of the fiscal year). This report card will measure the performance of the policies and actions in this plan. The committee may also make recommendations to improve the plan.
- The Access by Design Report Card will be a public document. It will be posted on the Town's website.

Evaluating

The Town will lead a public review and evaluation of Wolfville: Access by Design before fiscal year 2022/23.

Responding to Questions and Complaints

- Anyone can lodge a complaint, pose a question, or express a concern about accessibility in the Town of Wolfville. These should be directed to the Accessibility Coordinator.
- The Accessibility Coordinator will respond within a reasonable time. Before responding, the Coordinator will consult with the staff person responsible for the area of inquiry. The Coordinator's response will contain the reasons for the decision.
- Anyone can appeal to Council if they are not satisfied with the response from the Accessibility Coordinator. Council may refer any appeal to the Accessibility Advisory Committee for additional review and recommendations before issuing a final response to the complainant.
- The Accessibility Coordinator will keep a record of all complaints, questions, and concerns submitted to them, and will provide summary updates to the advisory committee on a regular basis. These updates will become part of the advisory committee's continual review of the Accessibility Plan, and may inform future changes.

Appendices

Committee Members

Agnieszka Hayes, *(Chair) Member at Large, Two Year Term*

Birgit Elssner, *(Vice-chair) Member at Large, Two Year Term*

Mercedes Brian, *Councillor, Two Year Term*

Oonagh Proudfoot, *Alternate Councillor*

David Daniels, *Member at Large, Two Year Term*

Rebecca Smith, *Member at Large, Two Year Term*

Andrew Roach, *Member at Large, Two Year Term*

Emily Duffett, *Member at Large, Three Year Term*

Ex-Officio Members

Mayor Jeff Cantwell, *ex-officio*

Erin Beaudin, *ex-officio*

Mike MacLean, *Director of Finance,
ex-officio (Accessibility Coordinator)*

902-542-4501

mmaclean@wolfville.ca



Council Awareness Rollabout Event

Wolfville's Mayor, Councillors and Accessibility Committee members experienced a small part of what it can be like to rely on a wheelchair to get from place to place, as well as barriers to those with visual impairments. Assistance and support for this awareness event was provided by the Nova Scotia Accessibility Directorate.



Community Engagement Event

On September 25th, 2018 the Committee held a Community event to engage the public in identifying barriers to accessibility in the Town of Wolfville. All were invited to check out the large maps of Wolfville and add sticky notes to areas of concern they have when it comes to accessibility. The Committee ended up with maps representing Built Form areas of concern for: General areas; Connections; Spots. This information was then turned into an overall map.

wolfville.ca

