

Wolfville: Access by Design

An Accessibility Plan for 2019-2022

DRAFT - Seeking Public Feedback

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Welcome Message

From Mayor Cantwell

“To be completed at a later date”

Introduction

- The Nova Scotia Accessibility Act
- Importance of community involvement, town hall meeting, audit of downtown, community walk and roll about, etc.

What We Believe

The Town of Wolfville is committed to ensuring equal access and participation for all people, regardless of their abilities. We are committed to treating all people in a way that allows them to maintain their dignity and independence. We believe in inclusion.

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

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Buildings, Infrastructure and Public Spaces:

Policy Objective

We will ensure that Town-owned, leased and operated buildings, offices and public spaces are accessible. We will work with citizens, the business community and Acadia University to encourage that other public and private spaces are accessible.

Baseline Report

Overview

The Town of Wolfville owns, leases and operates public facilities such as Town Hall, Rotary Park, numerous sidewalks, parking areas, and a wide variety of other buildings, parks and infrastructure.

Achievements

- Park improvements to create more-accessible areas at Reservoir park and along Harvest Moon Trail
- Rebuilding of sidewalks included as a part of the 10-year capital investment plan, and increased attention to sidewalk repairs within the Town's Operations Plan.
- Increased speed of snow clearance after purchasing additional snow removal equipment
- The customer service counter in Town Hall is a height that is wheelchair accessible
- Town Hall is barrier free on the first floor

Barriers

- Uneven sidewalks and walkways
- Narrow entryways to existing public and private buildings
- Some public open spaces, such as the Mona Parsons Statue, Quiet Park and the Rail Trail are inaccessible to those with mobility challenges
- Bathroom facilities built without accessibility in mind
- Limited accessible parking options
- Steep ramps without mid-ramp landings (including at Town Hall)
- Lack of signage for persons with visual and hearing impairments
- Competing demands between car and pedestrian traffic for street priority and snow clearance.
- Sidewalk snow clearing does not always meet accessibility requirements
- The cost of retrofitting existing building can be prohibitively expensive
- Competing demands, including addressing infrastructure deficit to maintain existing essential services such as water and sewer services

Policies

- All municipal facilities are to meet the Accessibility requirements (Schedule “C”) of the latest version of the Nova Scotia Building Code Regulation by 2021. For facilities not completed by that date, a plan to address the remaining facilities by 2025.
- All new municipal buildings (including major renovations) are to be built to meet the Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification (RHFAC) Gold Standard
- Encourage private developers to have their existing buildings RHFAC certified and for new developments to meet the RHFAC Gold Standard
- Provide basic access for all ages and abilities to public buildings, public washrooms, and at public parks with a natural slope of less than 5% (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, where possible, to the standard outlined in Canadian Standards Association (CSA) B651-12, Accessible Design for the Built Environment
- Provide accessible parking locations, and associated curb cuts, dispersed throughout the Core Area
- Density Bonusing for Private developers who meet Rick Hansen Gold Standards within the Core Area
- RHF Accessibility Certification be considered 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.
- Provide crosswalks and curb-cuts in areas of high-pedestrian use, such as near schools and parks
- Encourage seniors to “age in place” through alternative housing options, such as “granny-flats”, co-housing, senior shared housing with students etc.

Actions

- Highest Priority
 - Sidewalk curb cuts at all intersections where sidewalks exist
 - Commit a portion of annual budget to install, maintain or improve accessibility infrastructure
 - Ensure all pedestrian buttons, or light controls such as 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 to ensure free travel.

- Provide power door operators or automated sliding doors and widened doorways at the entrance of municipal buildings and public washrooms
- Sidewalk snow clearing is to meet or exceed the standard that is applied to the adjacent street
- Provide auditory, visual and tactile markers at intersections with high pedestrian use, such as within the Core Area and near schools and parks.
- Other Priorities
 - Ensure access to Council Chambers meets CSA Accessibility requirements by March 31, 2020
 - Provide a mid-ramp landing to facilitate first floor access at Town Hall
 - Accessible heights for service desks and self-service stations, including the Community Development and Public Works building
 - Work with Library partners, such as Annapolis Valley Regional Library, to ensure library collections are more accessible
 - Any renovations to private buildings made with the intent of meeting the RHF Accessibility Certification is to be fast tracked for approval, and have their development fee waived
 - Should prospective developers or business owners wish to certify their building, that consideration be given to:
 - deduct the cost of RHF Accessibility Certification from development fees, and
 - fast track these applications through the development approval process
 - Explore amending Land Use Bylaws to expand the use of secondary and backyard suites and facilitate co-housing arrangements
 - Promote the province's Small Business ACCESS-Ability Grant Program to the Wolfville Business Community, including the Wolfville Business Development Corporation
 - Ensure Aging in Place housing options are encouraged and allowed in the municipal planning strategy and zoning by-law.

Information and Communications

Policy Objective

We will ensure that persons of all ages and abilities can equitably receive and understand information and communications delivered by the Town of Wolfville.

We will build understanding about accessibility and increase awareness about the rights of persons of all ages and abilities and barriers to participation.

Baseline Report

Overview

The Town delivers information to the public through a variety of communication channels:

- Meetings of Town Council and Advisory Committee meetings, which are open to the public
- Email, the Town's website, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other forms of social media are used to communicate with public
- Kiosks are used to promote events and special town meetings
- The town participates in public awareness campaigns

Achievements

- Meetings are generally held at Town Hall, the first floor of which is barrier free
- When meetings are not held at Town Hall, a wheelchair accessible venue is booked, whenever possible
- Agenda and minutes of all meetings are posted on the Town website
- Audio is provided for Town Council meetings in real time, and is archived on the Town's website
- Town Council meetings are streamed on Facebook Live. This new initiative will improve as technical issues are resolved with Town IT equipment.
- The Emergency Management Office (EMO) Coordinator has reached out directly to seniors and to seniors housing to develop a contact list that can be accessed in the event of an emergency

Barriers

- There is currently no process for hearing impaired individuals to attend or participate in public meetings, including meetings of Town Council and Advisory Committee meetings
- The Town's website is not accessible

- Staff are generally not trained to identify how inclusion can be promoted in communications
- “Plain language” is not consistently utilized in written material
- There is an overall lack of awareness within the community regarding barriers to accessibility
- The Municipal Government Act creates restrictive requirements for certain public notices, such as requirements to publish advertisements in newspapers, which may not be accessible to persons with visual impairments
- Streaming video, and associated technologies, do not always work as intended

Policies

- On request, the Town of Wolfville will provide information in an accessible format, or with communication supports that consider a person’s specific needs. The Town will build a campaign to promote that this service is available
- The Town of Wolfville’s digital presence and IT systems are accessible and useable by persons with of all ages and abilities
- All Town of Wolfville in-person public meetings will be held in barrier-free locations
- Town of Wolfville front-line staff shall have basic training in multiple methods of communication to ensure persons with disabilities are able to request information in an accessible format

Actions

- Highest Priority
 - Relevant staff will be trained on how inclusion can be included in communications
 - Develop and implement a public awareness program (internal and external) to build awareness around barriers to accessibility and what an accessible community means
 - Large print editions of key municipal resources, including recreation guides, emergency management information and bylaw services will be produced using plain language and distributed, upon request
 - The Town of Wolfville shall ensure digital communication is screen-readable, including emergency alerts. The Town will encourage its partner agencies, to achieve the same standard of communication
- Other Priorities
 - By 2021 the Town of Wolfville’s web presence will meet the latest Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)

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- American Sign Language (ASL) and/or Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) services will be available at Town Council and other Town-hosted public meetings, upon request
 - All employee business cards are to include braille
 - The Town of Wolfville will work with the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities (NSFM) to advocate for the inclusion of accessibility considerations within the public notice requirements of the Municipal Government Act
 - Meeting agendas shall be announced within sufficient time to review and book communication accommodations as needed.

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Employment

Policy Objective

We will remove barriers to employment for persons of all ages and abilities seeking a career with the Town of Wolfville. This includes ensuring our workforce reflects the Town's diverse population and that we are making our employment practices and workplaces more accessible for new and existing employees of all ages and abilities

Baseline Report

Overview

The Town employs 42 permanent employees. Representation on Town Council and Advisory Committees is open to all members of the public.

Achievements

- Members of Council are provided iPads for access to agendas and Town documents. This allows for the ability to zoom in on documents to enhance font size, making reading accessible to more individuals
- Town Hall is barrier free on the first floor
- Council table is generally wheelchair accessible
- The Public Works/Community Development building is wheelchair accessible on the first floor

Barriers

- The second-floor town of all Town owned buildings are not wheelchair accessible
- Staff, including senior management, are generally not trained to recognize barriers to individuals interested in employment opportunities
- Job postings are distributed through traditional methods, including web pages, which may not be accessible to some individuals
- Because the Town does not have a Human Resources Department, there is a limited ability to assist staff with individual needs

Policies

- Accommodation is offered during recruitment if needed
- Accommodation is offered to employees of all ages and abilities, including providing assistive devices so that employees can be successful at their job

- The Town of Wolfville will track the number of employees with disabilities, with the aim of reflecting the Town's demographic by 2020
- Town of Wolfville employees will build an understanding of the value of accessibility and inclusion

Actions

- Highest Priority
 - The employee training manual will be updated to include a section on respecting diversity, including training in working with people of all ages and abilities. All town employees will be required to take the Working with Abilities on-line training provided free by the NS Human Rights Commission (workwithabilitiesns.ca)
 - A centralized "accommodation fund" will be established to pay for an assistive device or accommodation required by employees to be successful at their job. The existence of this fund will be promoted on the employment posting
- Other Priorities
 - Survey municipal workforce to achieve ages and abilities employee baseline data
 - Produce annual diversity reports, which include trends and analysis regarding persons with varying abilities.
 - The Town shall share the opportunity for accessibility training with residents and local businesses online or in conjunction with Town of Wolfville staff training.
 - Staff will investigate alternative strategies to promote job postings with the aim of reaching a wider and more diverse audience and include statements to ensure applicants are aware that accommodation can be provided.
 - A designated staff person will be tasked with assisting individuals who may require assistance to be successful at their jobs

Delivery of Goods and Services

Policy Objective

We will ensure that persons 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 in place to promote accessibility in the delivery of goods and services.

Baseline Report

Overview

The Town of Wolfville provides numerous services to the public:

- Administering meetings of Town Council and various Advisory Committees
- Overseeing communication to the public (see Information and Communication section)
- Providing Customer Service counters
- Maintaining street infrastructure, including sidewalk snow removal (see Built Environment section)
- Maintaining numerous parks, trails and open spaces, including playgrounds, and a Visitor Information Centre (see Built Environment section)

Achievements

- The customer service counter in Town Hall is at a height that is wheelchair accessible
- The Visitor Information Centre is wheelchair accessible
- The Recreation Centre at Rotary Park is wheelchair accessible

Barriers

- No staff members are trained in alternative communication methods, such as American Sign Language (ASL)
- No resources are explicitly available to access in instances of need for alternative communications
- The Town's website is not accessible to those with visual impairments

Policy

- No resident shall be denied a service provided by the Town of Wolfville on the basis of ability

Actions

- Highest Priorities
 - Ensure Willow Park can be enjoyed by people of all ages and abilities
 - Improved snow clearance
 - An adapted listing of recreation programs and services for individuals of all ages and abilities is available and updated annually
 - Appropriate staff to receive training to ensure the services they deliver are accessible to residents with diverse abilities
- Other Priorities
 - Entrance fees for individuals who support persons with disabilities in order to participate in leisure activities are waived
 - An accommodation fund will be established to ensure funding exists to provide services for residents in need of accommodation, such as Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) and American Sign Language (ASL)
 - Sign language interpreters are available upon request for persons to participate in recreation and library programs
 - Accessible exercise equipment is available at municipal recreational facilities
 - The Town's Building Inspector will attend accessibility training such as through the RHFAC training offered through the Nova Scotia Community College
 - Where applicable, an "Accessibility Lens"/Impact Analysis will be included in reports to council, and consultant reports delivered to staff and council

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Transportation

Objective

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

Baseline Report

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 Central and Eastern Kings County residents. KPPT operates a fleet of 8 vehicles including an 18 passenger minibus, all of which are accessible.

The Town of Wolfville licenses 16 taxis.

Achievements

All Kings Transit Authority buses:

- Are equipped with Global Positioning System (GPS) and Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) via DoubleMap
- Are equipped with Automatic Voice Annunciation (AVA) Technology to assist passengers with visual impairments
- Are low floor, kneeling capable and have electric ramps
- Have priority seating

All 8 of 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

- No resident shall be denied transit or taxi service on the basis of a disability
- No resident shall be charged an additional fee for transit or taxi service on the basis of a disability

Actions

- Highest Priority
 - Snow clearing for transit stops
 - Ensure the construction and placement of transit stops shall be designed to meet or exceed Canadian Standards Association Standard (CSA) B651-12, Accessible Design for the Built Environment
- Other Priorities
 - Explore providing subsidized transit fares and/or transit passes to persons with disabilities and/or low-income individuals
 - Ensure training is available for operators and drivers of public transportation
 - Ensure accessible taxi service is available to the public by:
 - a) Consulting with the Accessibility Advisory Committee and the public to determine the proportion of on-demand accessible taxis required, and demonstrate progress toward meeting that need;
 - b) Ensuring that no person is charged additional fees or is charged a fee for storage of mobility aids or mobility assistive devices; and
 - c) Ensuring that vehicle registration is visible, and available in accessible formats for passengers of all ages and abilities.
 - d) Ensure adequate accessible taxi cabs are available

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Implementation

Schedule

All Priority Actions in this plan will be implemented by March 31, 2022

Monitoring

- The Wolfville Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) will prepare an Access by Design Report Card for Council at the end of each fiscal year measuring the performance of the Policies and Actions in this Plan. The AAC is also encouraged to make recommendations for improvement of the Plan
- The Access by Design Report Card will be a public document and posted on the Town's Website

Evaluation

- A public review and evaluation of Wolfville Access by Design will be undertaken before Fiscal Year 2022/23
- A public complaint process shall include a reasonable response by the Town.

Responsibility

- The ultimate responsibility for the adoption and implementation of Wolfville Access by Design rests with Town Council
- Administrative responsibility for implementation rests with the Chief Administrative Officer of the Town of Wolfville

Appendices:

Accessibility Advisory Committee members and expertise

Community Barrier Mapping Results

Town Hall Meeting Results