

AGENDA

Accessibility Committee

Wednesday, January 8, 2025 at 7:00pm

Via Zoom

https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86879069304?pwd=liV8F9w7KDA8RDbqauXyzi52DsgxjO.1

Meeting ID: 868 7906 9304

Passcode: 337323

Mandate: The primary function of the Accessibility Advisory Committee is to identify barriers to inclusion and accessibility, and to make recommendations to Council as to how to remove and prevent these barriers.

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT (7:00pm)

The Town of Ladysmith acknowledges with gratitude that this meeting takes place on the unceded territory of the Stz'uminus First Nation.

2. AGENDA APPROVAL

3. MINUTES APPROVAL

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Minutes of the meeting held November 27, 2024 (attached) for approval.

4. ACCESSIBILITY PLAN FRAMEWORK BRAINSTORMING

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The Committee will continue to provide suggestions regarding the Accessibility Plan framework (changes made at the last meeting are attached), including recommendations to add, delete, rename or reorganize anything within the document. Compiling a list of potential action items under the plan's key areas of focus will be a priority.

5. NEW BUSINESS

6. NEXT MEETING

7. ADJOURNMENT



**MINUTES OF THE ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 27, 2024
MEETING HELD ELECTRONICALLY VIA ZOOM**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Diane Hobelaid, Chair
Jordan Herbison
Councillor Amanda Jacobson

Shaun McKenzie
Christina Stephen

REGRETS

Andy Hobelaid

STAFF PRESENT

Sue Bouma (Manager of Corporate Services)

Nick Pescod (Communications & Engagement Specialist)

CALL TO ORDER AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Ms. Hobelaid, Chair, called the Accessibility Advisory Committee meeting to order at 7:04 p.m., recognizing with gratitude that it was taking place on the unceded territory of the Stz'uminus First Nation.

AGENDA APPROVAL

Moved and seconded:
That the agenda for the November 27, 2024 meeting of the Accessibility Advisory Committee be approved as presented.
Motion carried.

MINUTES APPROVAL

Moved and seconded:
That the minutes of the October 30, 2024 Accessibility Advisory Committee meeting be approved.
Motion carried.

ACCESSIBILITY PLAN FRAMEWORK

The Committee reviewed the updates made to the Accessibility Plan framework as a result of the October 30th Committee meeting and provided additional suggestions going forward.

NEW BUSINESS

NEXT MEETING

The Committee agreed to meet electronically for its next meeting on January 8, 2025.

ADJOURNMENT

Moved and seconded:

That this Accessibility Advisory Committee Meeting be adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Motion carried.

RECEIVED:

Diane Hobelaid
Chair

Sue Bouma
Corporate Officer

Ladysmith Accessibility Plan

Land Acknowledgement

The Ladysmith Accessibility Plan acknowledges that the Town of Ladysmith and its residents reside on the unceded territory of the Stz'uminus First Nation.

Introduction

The Town of Ladysmith is committed to fostering an inclusive and accessible environment for all residents and visitors. This plan outlines our strategy to identify, remove, and prevent barriers to accessibility, ensuring that everyone can fully participate in community life.

This Accessibility Plan is a living document that will evolve as we continue to engage with the community and address new challenges. The scope of the plan includes Town-owned properties, public spaces, and town facilities.

Legislative Framework

In 2021, the Province of British Columbia enacted the Accessible BC Act, requiring local governments to evaluate their communities from an accessibility perspective. This legislation mandates the formation of an accessibility committee and the development of an accessibility plan. It also emphasizes the importance of soliciting public feedback on the plan and identifying barriers faced by individuals when interacting with the organization.

Principles considered when developing this plan

As required under the Act, the following seven (7) principles were considered when developing this plan:

- Inclusion
- Adaptability
- Diversity
- Collaboration

- Self-determination
- Universal design

Vision and Goals

Our vision is to create an inclusive community where individuals from all ethnic and cultural backgrounds, income levels, ability and gender identities, have equal access to services, facilities, and opportunities. The goals of this plan are to:

1. Identify barriers and remove or adapt them to promote accessibility.
2. Promote Universal Design in all new developments and renovations (see Appendix A).
3. Enhance public awareness and understanding of accessibility issues.
4. Ensure continuous improvement and community engagement in accessibility initiatives.

Accessibility Advisory Committee

In 2023 an Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) was established, consisting of residents with diverse experiences and knowledge of disability issues. The AAC has provided guidance and feedback on the development and implementation of this Accessibility Plan and will continue to work with the Town to help create a more accessible and inclusive Ladysmith.

Definitions

- **Accessibility**
Accessibility involves removing the barriers faced by individuals. These can include, but are not limited to, physical, sensory, cognitive, learning and mental health, and the various barriers, including attitudinal and systemic, that impede an individual's ability to participate in social, cultural, political, and economic life. Disabilities can be temporary or permanent. As we age, our abilities change and therefore an accessible society is one designed to include everybody, at all stages of life.
- **Diversity**
Diversity is understanding that each person is unique and acknowledging the differences that make us individuals. **True**

diversity is the inclusion and representation of individuals from a variety of backgrounds, perspectives and experiences in a given environment. It ensures all individuals are respected and empowered to participate equally, and their unique contributions are valued by everyone.

- **Equity**

Refers to both the fair and just distribution of benefits and burdens to all affected parties and communities (distributional equity) along with the fair and inclusive access to decision-making processes that impact community outcomes (process equity). In practice, taking an equitable approach means understanding and deliberately addressing current and historic underrepresentation and disadvantages.

- **Inclusion**

Acknowledging and valuing people's differences to enrich social planning, decision-making, and quality of life for everyone. In an inclusive municipality, we each have a sense of belonging and acceptance, and are recognized as valued and contributing citizens. Real inclusion takes place when those already included learn from those who are excluded and initiate change. Inclusion reality is the actual current state and effectiveness of inclusion practices

- **Intersectionality**

The intersection, or crossover, of our many identities affects how each of us experience the region and its communities. These intersections occur within a context of connected systems and structures of power (e.g., laws, policies, senior governments, other political and economic unions, religious institutions, media).

- **Privilege**

The experience of freedoms, rights, benefits, advantages, access and/or opportunities afforded to members of a dominant group in a society or in each context.

- **Public Spaces**

In this document "public spaces" means Town-owned buildings and spaces and includes streets, parks, fields, sidewalks, and Town-owned facilities.

- **Self-determination**
The ability to make one's own choices and pursue the life one wishes to live.
- **Systemic Barriers**
Obstacles that exclude groups or communities of people from full participation in, and the benefits of, social, economic and political life. They may be hidden or unintentional but are built into the way society operates. Existing policies, practices, and procedures, as well as assumptions and stereotypes, may reinforce these barriers.
- **Universal Design**
The framework used to create an environment that provides maximum accessibility for people of all ages, sizes, abilities or disabilities. (See Appendix 1.)

A. FRAMEWORK OF THE PLAN

Key Areas of Focus

1. Town-owned Public Buildings and Spaces

- **Audits and Upgrades:** Conduct accessibility audits of all Town-owned public buildings and spaces. Implement necessary modifications to ensure compliance with accessibility standards, including but not limited to ramps, automatic doors, accessible washrooms, and signage.
- **Inclusive Design:** Ensure new buildings and space designs are guided by the Seven Principles of Universal Design (see Appendix A), with inclusion in mind from the outset.
- **Consultative Partnerships:** Ensure that consultations are made with professionals with expertise in accessibility issues.
- **Cooperate Regionally**
- **Public Consultation:** Ensure that consultation takes place with members of the public most affected.

2. Transportation

- **Conduct audits** of all transit, bus stops, shelters, pedestrian pathways, crosswalks and cycling routes.

- **Collaboration with other Stakeholders:** advocate for accessible buses, bus stops and shelters.
- **Parking:** Designate accessible parking spaces close to building entrances and ensure proper signage and access to level curb ramps.
- **Active Transportation:** Develop and maintain accessible pedestrian pathways, crosswalks, and cycling routes.

3. Parks and Recreation

- **Inclusive Facilities:** Improve the accessibility of parks, playgrounds, and recreational facilities. Ensure pathways are wide and smooth, provide accessible seating and picnic areas, and install adaptive playground equipment.
- **Inclusive and Adaptive Programming:** Offer adaptive/inclusive sports and recreation programs to cater to individuals with different abilities.

4. Information and Communication

- **Accessible Formats:** Make all public information available in accessible formats, such as braille, large print, and digital formats compatible with screen readers.
- **Website Accessibility:** Ensure the Town's website follows best practices for digital accessibility, as outlined in the Web Content

Accessibility Guidelines by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) Accessibility Initiative (www.w3.org).

- **Communication Support:** Provide a level of best practice through communication supports for public meetings and events, such as sign language interpreters and FM speakers.

5. Employment

- **Inclusive Hiring Practices:** Promote inclusive hiring practices and ensure that job opportunities are accessible to all qualified applicants as per the Town's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Statement.
- **Workplace Accommodations:** Provide necessary accommodations for employees with disabilities and offer training for staff on disability awareness and inclusion with consultation of appropriate professionals if required.

B. GUIDANCE

Community Engagement and Feedback

- **Public Consultations:** Conduct regular public consultations to gather input from residents on accessibility issues and areas for improvement.

- **Feedback Mechanism:** Establish an online platform for residents to provide feedback and report accessibility issues. This platform will include a map tool to identify specific locations needing accessibility upgrades.

C. ACTION

Implementation and Monitoring

- **Timeline:** The Accessibility Plan will be implemented over a three-year period, with specific milestones and targets set for each year .
- **Annual Review:** The AAC will review progress annually and provide a report to Town Council. Adjustments to the plan will be made based on feedback and new accessibility standards .
- **Continuous Improvement:** Regularly update the plan to incorporate new best practices and address emerging accessibility issues.

Action Taken to Date (organized under the framework section's key areas of focus)

- a) Town-owned Public Buildings & Spaces
- b) Transportation
- c) Parks and Recreation
- d) Information and Communication
- e) Employment

Action Items (organized under the framework section's key areas of focus)

- a) Town-owned Public Buildings & Spaces
- b) Transportation
- c) Parks and Recreation
- d) Information and Communication

e) Employment

ADJOURNMENT

Moved and seconded:

That this Accessibility Advisory Committee Meeting be adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Motion carried.

RECEIVED:

Diane Hobelaid
Chair

Sue Bouma
Corporate Officer