Access Advisory Committee ANNUAL REPORT 2005





Access Advisory Committee honours dynamic projects with Winnipeg Accessibility Awards

For Gaby Sparks, receiving an Accessibility Award was an added benefit. Her home is a haven. She enters the front door with ease, given the sloped entrance. Cupboards are lower in her kitchen. A deck in the backyard can be accessed either by the house or a ramp in the yard. She even has an accessible shed.

"For the first time in ten years," I can move within my home independently. It's great," she says.

The Winnipeg Accessibility Awards on September 23, 2005 brought awareness to several dynamic projects featuring universal design elements, like the **Sparks Home**.

(see photo top centre)

Over 100 people gathered in the Mayor's Foyer to discover the projects that the Access Advisory Committee (AAC) would recognize. Entrepreneurs, politicians, activists and interested citizens waited with anticipation to discover which projects would be highlighted.

Chair of the AAC, Councillor Jenny Gerbasi, hosted the event. Eleanor Smith, Executive Director of Concrete Change, explained the concept of "Visitable Housing".

With each winning project, there was an accessibility overview and slides of the project.

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Winnipeg Leaders in Accessibility

The world's eyes are on Winnipeg. We're known nationally and internationally, as the city leading the way to accessibility.

They celebrated with us when we were the first Canadian city to adopt a Universal Design Policy and thanked us for sharing our knowledge. They commend us for staying informed of the latest Universal Design technology and being an inspiration to improve accessibility.

The result is that Winnipeg government, businesses and individuals are working towards a pro-access environment.

Accessibility Awards

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Businesses like the **Inn at the Forks** (see photo page 1 top left) and **Smith Carter Architects and Engineers** Inc proudly received their awards and delivered heartfelt speeches about their commitment to accessibility.

Glen Manning, landscape architect for the **Provencher Bridge/Esplanade Riel** project, says, "The view is best from the accessible path. Style and beauty don't have to be compromised with accessibility."

Designers and architects have implemented universal design concepts into high profile projects like the **MTS Centre** and the outdoor landscaping for **Red River College, Princess Campus**. Along with an inviting look and feel, enhanced accessibility has provided tremendous economic benefits for these businesses.

Thanks to the Access Advisory Committee, accessible buildings, landscapes and residences are no longer Winnipeg's best-kept secrets.



Above: Provencher Bridge/ Esplanade Riel project

The **Brummit-Feasby ALS Home** emphasized Guy's point. Wider doorways, accessible washrooms and kitchen cabinetry were just a starting point. The home had an extreme make-over for comfort and ease of use. Lower windows provide residents with the chance to view park-like surroundings while lying in bed for those days when they can not enjoy coffee on the deck.



Above and right: accessible signage and entrance for Red River College, Princess Campus means all staff and students can be included



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR:

COUNCILLOR JENNY GERBASI

A ground-breaking year for Winnipeg!

The Access Advisory Committee received tremendous public support this past year from the community. Groups that represent persons with disabilities have spoken out about the importance of the AAC.

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We were pleased Mayor Katz made time to attend a recent meeting. The Committee was thrilled to have him witness us in action and see the contribution we make.

It was a huge honour when the AAC's work was acknowledged at the grand opening of the Millennium Library. AAC members had toured the library and provided input at every stage of the design process, resulting in a better, accessible design.

The Audible Signals Research Project explored challenges with current applications and possible solutions. Many thanks to the University of Manitoba, Faculty of Engineering for their work and Doug Strong for designing a new speaker box. Ed Pacholok and Nolan Burke from the City's Department of Public Works went beyond the call of duty in their involvement.

This year the Committee took a step forward in raising awareness about Universal Design and Visitable Housing. Founder of the Visitable Housing movement, speaker Eleanor Smith, helped us to increase awareness in the private sector about Visitable Housing at the Winnipeg Accessibility Awards and Visitable Housing seminar.

Universal Design and Visitable Housing mean doing it right the first time. If you do it right the first time, it doesn't cost more. It also means full participation for all citizens.

We are making progress in delivering these messages. An Accessibility Award has become desirable and meaningful to receive. Visitable Housing is becoming more familiar to designers, architects and builders.

The AAC will continue to work with the City of Winnipeg and the community to ensure Universal Design is a priority. There is value in doing things in an accessible way. It makes good business sense for buildings to accommodate people throughout their lifetime.



Improving audible traffic signals

An Audible Traffic Signal (ATS) is a signal that a pedestrian hears, prompting them to cross the street.

New research from the Access Advisory Committee and University of Manitoba Faculty of Engineering suggests Winnipeg's winter means changes

Since the 1970's, Winnipeg has been using Audible Transit Signals to help people with visually impairments safely cross the street. Today, the city has over 200 ATS.

The ten feet speaker height of ATS posed a problem, making it difficult for pedestrians to hear. The noise for the nearby neighbourhood and vandalism of ATS were other concerns.

In winter 2005, the University of Manitoba's Faculty of Engineering launched a research project with support of funds from the Access Advisory Committee and Corporate Services, Equity and Diversity Branch to examine and evaluate ATS performance. The team tested ATS at varying speaker heights in different seasons while assessing activation and street width and complexity. A secondary objective was to design an ATS speaker that met community and usability needs while being weather and vandalism proof. During the winter and spring/summer, volunteers with vision of 0 to 10 percent tested four intersections in Winnipeg. Research finished in September 2005. The team presented their findings in late 2005.

They discovered that locating the speaker at four feet helped pedestrians find where to cross. They recommended changing the timing of the crossing tones (chirping) versus locating tones (ticking) to match walk/don't walk signs. They also suggested consistent installation and maintenance of intersections to ensure better accessibility.

Doug Strong, retired professor of engineering, designed a new speaker box based on the exponential loudspeaker horn. It met all three goals – the control of sound to diminish neighbourhood disturbance, and was durable enough to withstand Winnipeg weather and possible vandalism.



A visitable house is:

a home with a level entry into the home, wider doors and hallways throughout and an accessible washroom on the main floor. These simple changes can make it easier for people in wheelchairs to move, but they also benefit toddlers, seniors and those with temporary injuries like broken legs. Wider doorways also make bringing in an armful of groceries or a stroller easier and can ease the stress of moving day.

Access Advisory Committee sparks seminar on visitable housing

"When formerly able bodied people have their lives disrupted because of accident or illness, human connections diminish because they can't visit friends or family," says Eleanor Smith, Executive Director of Concrete Change.

The idea of a Visitable Housing information session was introduced in March 2005, when Councillor Gerbasi and members of the Access Advisory Committee met with The Honourable Christine Melnick, Minister responsible for Persons with Disabilities. This partnership expanded to include the Manitoba Family Services and Housing and Disabilities Issues Office and the University of Manitoba Faculty of Architecture (Department of City Planning), all of whom joined the Access Advisory Committee in presenting the Visitable Housing Seminar at the Norwood Hotel on Thursday, September 22, 2005.

One hundred and eight people with a wide range of interests – designers, architects, developers, builders, government representatives and occupational therapists – attended the event, which featured keynote speaker Eleanor Smith from Atlanta, Georgia.

Eleanor Smith has used a wheelchair for most of her life. She knows first-hand the isolation that can result from the lack of Visitable Housing. "We must end isolation and permit people who develop mobility issues stay in our homes" she says.

"You can have both an aesthetically pleasing design and basic access. You can have cost effectiveness and basic access," says Eleanore, de-bunking myths about visitable housing.

"We are not working to overcome barriers, but to remove barriers. Fate doesn't create housing. Humans create housing." New developments like Waverley West are opportunities to create Visitable Housing that benefits everyone.

New housing developments like Waverley West are opportunities to create housing with access that benefits everyone.



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Access Advisory Committee Members 2005

Chair:
Councillor Jenny Gerbasi

Alternate:
Councillor Harvey Smith

Committee Members:
Diane Caley
Doris Koop
RoseAnn MacKinnon
Colin Mathieson
Victor Pereira
Sandy Popham
Ken Shachtay
Lou Ella Shannacappo
David Tweed
Tanis Woodland

Committee Coordinator:
Kathy Taylor-Hallick

Universal Design Coordinator:
Judy Redmond

City Clerk's Office:
Jennifer Ridge

Provincial Representative:
David Martin

Alternate: John Wyndels

Investing in Universal Design



For the past three years, civic properties have been upgraded through the City-Wide Accessibility Program.

During this time, over $750,000 has been committed in a variety of projects to enhance access for all.

The Universal Design Coordinator oversees the program; the AAC is represented on the committee that examines proposed projects. Last year alone, with a budget of $250,000, the program received $1.2 million in proposed projects.

As the Accessibility Program's budget is primarily used to retrofit city properties with barriers to access, the AAC advocated that program not only continue, but also expand to meet community needs.



Sharing what We know

One of the great benefits of the collective knowledge a committee like the AAC possesses is the opportunity to consult on a variety of projects, including:

- Accessibility Guide
- City of Winnipeg Zoning By-Law Review
- Cloutier Trail
- Waverley West
- Millennium Library
- MLPD Transportation Committee
- MTS Centre
- City Wide Accessibility Program
- Universal Design Steering Committee

Guiding the future of the AAC

Considerable progress has been made towards universally designed civic resources. To determine other projects, partnerships and actions the AAC can establish to further access issues, we will up-date the current strategic plan in the coming months. This blueprint for the future will establish where we want to go and how we can get there.

With thanks...

A number of individuals and groups have been instrumental in helping the Access Advisory Committee work toward a pro-access environment. We extend our thanks for your efforts and input and are grateful for your contribution:

Mayor Sam Katz • City Council • The Honourable Christine Melnick, Minister Responsible for Persons with Disabilities • The University of Manitoba, Faculty of Architecture • The University of Manitoba, Faculty of Engineering • Doug Strong • Ed Pacholok • Nolan Burke • Public Works • Volunteers for the ATS research project • Judy Redmond, Universal Design Coordinator • Eleanor Smith, Concrete Change • panel members at the Visitable Housing Seminar • the disability community in Winnipeg • the general public • the local media

Financial report 2005

Revenues

Council Funding $69,000.00

Expenditures

- Meeting Costs (operating).....4,500.00
- Administrative Support 40,000.00
- Administrative Supplies 7,850.00
- Special Projects 11,000.00
- Communication.....5,650.00

TOTAL.....$69,000.00

Furthering Universal Design through play



Imagine play spaces where all children – regardless of their abilities – can play together. Picture play areas where parents with disabilities can take their children without worrying about access.

This vision is precisely what the City of Edmonton created with their Play Area Accessibility Design Standard. The Access Advisory Committee is working with administration towards the development of a framework for making new play areas on City of Winnipeg properties accessible to all.

Did you know?

- The AAC was created in 1989 when City Council identified "enhancing accessibility for persons with disabilities to the benefit of all citizens" as a priority.
- The Deaf Community can access civic services by arranging for American Sign Language Interpreters, thanks to a **Sign Language Interpreter Policy** adopted in February 2001.
- For the first time in Winnipeg's history, the City Council Chamber is accessible by elevator.
- Universal Design Coordinator Judy Redmond was hired in 2003 to ensure the Universal Design Policy remains a living policy through implementation, education and outreach.
- The Universal Design Policy incorporates ability, size, age, language and culture as factors to consider when civic properties, information and services are planned and designed.