Minutes – Executive Policy Committee - July 4, 2007

REPORTS

Minute No. 424 Access Advisory Committee - 2006 Annual Report
File CR-3

EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE DECISION:

The Executive Policy Committee received as information the 2006 Annual Report from the Access Advisory Committee.

DECISION MAKING HISTORY:

Moved by Councillor Wyatt,
That the 2006 Annual Report from the Access Advisory Committee be received as information.

Carried

ACCESS ADVISORY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On June 12, 2007, the Access Advisory Committee recommended:

1. That the final revisions be incorporated into the 2006 Annual Report.

2. That the Committee Coordinator be authorized to have 2000 English Copies and 100 French copies of the 2006 Annual Report printed.

3. That the 2006 Annual Report be submitted to the Executive Policy Committee upon receipt of the printed copies.

Access Advisory Committee

ANNUAL REPORT 2006

Chair's Message

Councillor Jenny Gerbasi

It's been another exciting year for the Access Advisory Committee. The 2006 Accessibility Awards were the most well-attended to date.

At the awards this year we raised awareness about accessible play. From Edmonton, we welcomed expert Doug Nutting to speak about accessible play structures. He was also featured at a workshop for City staff about the latest trends and policy changes. National standards are being updated and soon all new play structures will require accessibility. The AAC is helping to make Winnipeg a leader in this area.

Accessible play structures currently cost more to build. Lord Roberts School, which you'll read about in this report, is an inspiring example of how a community of humble means can work together to raise money and produce an award winning accessible play structure.



Unveiling of a plaque commemorating Winnipeg's first curb cut courtesy of Canadian Paraplegic Association (Manitoba) Inc.

Left to right: - CPA Board Member Art Braid, Mayor Sam Katz, Councillor Jenny Gerbasi, CPA Executive Director Ron Burky.

We've continued to focus on visitable housing and have partnered with the Province.

Together, we can educate people about the importance of building homes that are accessible to people of all abilities throughout the lifespan.

This past year, the AAC helped to establish the Accessibility Design Standards Manual, which will take the Universal Design Policy to a new level. The standards will be used to guide the development of all City of Winnipeg projects and facilities. They are also available as a tool for the private sector to incorporate Universal Design and build facilities that all can access. This document includes standards that are over and above the basic building code, demonstrating the City's commitment to making Universal Design real.

On Wednesday, October 18th, Mayor Sam Katz joined me and board members from the Canadian Paraplegic Association (CPA) in unveiling a commemorative plaque. The plaque will be located at the corner of Sherbrook Street and Bannatyne Avenue where Winnipeg's first curb cut was created in 1964. It recognizes the City's commitment to accessible curbs and CPA's 60 years in the community.

Our strategic planning session determined streets and sidewalks, visitable housing and accessible play will be the major focus for the coming years. There is much work to do and our members are passionately committed to making the City of Winnipeg truly accessible for all to enjoy.

Access Advisory Committee

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And the Accessibility Award goes to...

It started with an idea: educating the community about the importance of accessibility and promoting the concept by presenting awards to companies and individuals who had made universal design a priority.

In 2006, the Accessibility Awards grew to a major event celebrating universal design in Winnipeg. Over 100 people attended, and heard speaker Doug Nutting present on Accessible Play. Mayor Sam Katz presented awards to: The Manitoba Cardiac Institute (Reh-Fit) Inc, ACCESS Transcona, The Hellsten Home, Lord Roberts School Play structure and an Honourable Mention to 125 Carriage Road apartment complex.

After the call for nominations goes out, the Committee Coordinator receives applications and fields questions about the Accessibility Awards.

The Reh-Fit underwent a major makeover. Only one original floor and wall remained after the year and a half the facility was under construction. "We're a medical fitness centre. We have people of all ages with various conditions so when we're doing anything, we're always thinking about being as inclusive as possible," says Sue Boreskie, Executive Director, who became aware of the Accessibility Awards when she worked at other facilities. When she received the call for nominations, she submitted an application.

Once all of the nominations have been received, a Steering Committee reviews them. This past year, professionals within the community were asking to be part of the Steering Committee, which includes architects, community people with an interest in accessibility, the Universal Design Coordinator and AAC members.

The Manitoba Cardiac Institute (Reh-Fit) Inc.



Along with reading applications, visits are made to each nominated facility. A tour of the facility's accessibility features includes taking photos and persons with disabilities testing universal design concepts for ease of use. In 2006, Winnipeg Transit supplied a bus and driver for the tour. The Reh-Fit was one of the stops on the tour.

Once the tour is complete and the facilities have been visited, winners are determined. The award plaques are ordered and created. The venue is secured and the caterer is arranged.

The result was a memorable event that has received political recognition and inquiries from other cities. In five short years, an Accessibility Award has gone from creating awareness to becoming a source of validation for facilities and designers, who proudly display their awards.

"Our accessibility has been verified and confirmed by an outside group," says Sue. "I commend the City of Winnipeg for taking on that initiative because when you design a building for accessibility, it's a better functioning facility for everybody."



Accessibility in City Parks and Walkways

Two University of Manitoba Occupational Therapy students did their practicum with the City in 2006. Their first goal was to determine the accessiblity of City trails. Parkways run within City parks and on streets like Wellington Crescent and Scotia Street. The next goal is to assess signage and mapping and introduce improvements as required.

Detectable Warnings on Curb Ramps

Public Works, the Universal Design Coordinator and the AAC worked together to test detectable warning surfaces on curb ramps in 2006. Brownish-red and yellow detectors were installed respectively in two different ways at two Winnipeg intersections: Portage Avenue and Dominion Street and McPhillips Street and Inkster Boulevard.

The product made it through the rigors of a Winnipeg winter. Feedback has identified yellow as the preferable colour. People with vision challenges and those who are colour blind had a difficult time with the brownish-red.

High use areas like downtown and/or capital projects may be places for detectable curb warnings to be further assessed, as testing is ongoing. Further locations are currently being discussed, as is the best option for purchasing the required materials.

Detectable warning surfaces were included in the Accessibility Design Standards Manual.

Improved Speaker Housing

The AAC joined Public Works and the Universal Design Coordinator for the University of Manitoba (U of M) study on audible traffic signals. Volunteers who tested them revealed there was room for improvement. The speaker height, effectiveness and overall look were concerns.

Professor Doug Strong, a now retired U of M professor and former member of the AAC, designed a new speaker model. The sleeker design is more appealing and virtually vandal proof.

Initially the new speaker model was placed in areas involved in capital projects where traffic poles were upgraded or relocated to suit people with disabilities. Effective summer 2006, where audible traffic signals will be used, the new style will be implemented.

Accessing Winter Sidewalks

After the winter of 2005/2006, City staff brainstormed operational changes that could provide better snow clearing services for the citizens of Winnipeg.

One solution to better winter sidewalk conditions was leaving the snow plowed from the road in a parking lane for up to 24 hours and then hauling it away. This concept was tried on a trial basis in downtown Winnipeg during the winter of 2006/2007. As the season progressed, it was implemented in other high pedestrian traffic areas.



"We had significantly reduced windrows of snow on the sidewalk, which helped with both pedestrian and vehicular traffic," says Bruce McPhail, Manager of Streets Maintenance, Public Works. "It also allowed us to maintain the sidewalks in a much better condition."

Challenges emerged from the winter 2006 test phase. The City quickly learned that signage to advise people used to using the lane for parking can help ease traffic flow and frustration.

"Based on this winter's experience, an extreme winter in terms of snowfall, we think it went very well," says Bruce. "The sidewalks were in much better condition. We received numerous indications from the general public as well as the Manitoba League for Persons with Disabilities, who expressed appreciation that the condition of the walks was much better this winter than it has been in the past. It's anticipated the policy for snow clearing will be modified to allow this program to continue in future years."

With Thanks... When individuals, groups and government work together to further accessibility issues, everyone benefits. For their efforts in creating a more accessible City of Winnipeg, the AAC thanks: Mayor Sam Katz • City Council • The Honourable Gord Mackintosh, Minister Responsible for Persons with Disabilities • Civic Administration • Public Works • Planning, Property and Development • Winnipeg Transit • the disability community in Winnipeg • the general public • The University of Manitoba • Professor Doug Strong • The University of Manitoba, Department of Occupational Therapy • River East Good Neighbours Senior Centre • Canadian Centre on Disability Studies • The Canadian Paraplegic Association (Manitoba) Inc. • The Manitoba Cardiac Institute • Judy Redmond, Universal Design Coordinator • Kathy Taylor Hallick

This report was specially designed to be inclusive. If the colours, font size and layout were easier for you to read, please let us know.

Play Structure Wins Accessibility Award

Lord Roberts School had plans about six or seven years ago to revamp its play structure. The initial design wasn't universally accessible.

"We weren't satisfied. It was as if we had a member of our family in a wheelchair and built a house without a ramp. It seemed ridiculous not to include everyone," says Betty Cinq-Mars, member of the Lord Roberts Parent Council, Play Structure Committee. "Lord Roberts has a large population of students that have special needs. It's what makes Lord Roberts special. We need to celebrate that and include those kids."

Fundraising efforts were launched to build an accessible play structure. Crozier Agencies, the first to design and build a wheelchair accessible structure with ramping in Winnipeg, was recruited to work on the structure.

"It gives opportunities for all to play, not just people who are physically challenged," says Farley Boutet Crozier, Sales Consultant for Crosier Agencies. "The playground allows children to enjoy play activities without leaving their support equipment behind.

The play structure is designed to be sensory rich so children with developmental and sensory disabilities can actively and safely participate with their peers."

The structure includes an asphalt approach ramp, wide ramping and big platforms to accommodate children in wheelchairs. Elevated accessible play components, ramping throughout, a roof for shade and alternating colour of deck elevations were incorporated into the design.

Betty says, "It's a way to demonstrate the spirit of Lord Roberts School – inclusivity."



Lord Roberts Play Structure

Information Technology and Solutions

Two AAC members attended The Hard-Wiring Inclusion Conference at the York Hotel on October 26 and 27, 2006, hosted by The Disability and Information Technologies (Dis-IT) Research Alliance. In October 2006, AAC members worked with Al Filleul (Corporate IT) to present a workshop on universal web design to City staff.

Financial Report 2006

Revenues:

Council Funding	$69,000

Expenditures:

Meeting Costs	3,728
Administrative Support	32,307
Administrative Supplies	4,890
Special Projects	5,305
Communication	4,010
TOTAL	**50,240**
BALANCE	**18,760**

Note: Balance returned to general revenue. Staffing changes resulted in a period of time when there were no expenses.

Committee Members 2006

Mayor Sam Katz (ex-officio)
Councillor Jenny Gerbasi, Chair
Councillor Harvey Smith, Alternate
Diane Caley
Ric Carreon
Doris Koop
Colin Mathieson
Liz Mitchell
Ken Shachtay
Catherine Pearse
Vic Pereira
David Tweed
Tanis Woodland

Committee Coordinator
Kathy Taylor-Hallick

Universal Design Coordinator
Judy Redmond

City Clerk's Office
Visa Hutter
Jennifer Ridge

Province of Manitoba Representatives
David Martin
John Wyndels

Goals

The Access Advisory held a strategic planning session on April 18, 2006 at the Norwood Hotel. For the next five years, three key areas were identified as priorities: streets and sidewalks, accessible play and accessible housing. Sub-committees were started to address community facilities and accessible housing. For the coming year we plan to:

- liaise with Public Works, Planning, Property and Development and other cities to determine solutions for accessible sidewalks, encroachments and street scaping,
- work with the province to further accessible housing,
- focus on public education and
- present recommendations to the City on priorities and how to improve accessibility.

We're pleased to introduce our new Committee Coordinator, Dianne Johnson. Contact the AAC at:

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