Minutes - Executive Policy Committee - May 21, 2008

REPORTS

Minute No. 331 Access Advisory Committee – 2007 Annual Report
File CR-3

EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE DECISION:

The Executive Policy Committee received as information the 2007 Annual Report from the Access Advisory Committee.

DECISION MAKING HISTORY:

Moved by Councillor Steeves,
That the 2007 Annual Report from the Access Advisory Committee be received as information.

Carried

ACCESS ADVISORY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On April 15, 2008, the Access Advisory Committee approved in principle its 2007 Annual Report for submission to the Executive Policy Committee.

Chair's Message
Councillor Jenny Gerbasi

It has been a productive year for the Access Advisory Committee (AAC) and I'm pleased to present our Annual Report for 2007. Inside you'll read about how the work of the AAC positively impacts the lives of Winnipeggers by promoting enhanced accessibility.

The AAC participated in the review of Zoning Bylaw 6400. The committee recommended reducing the requirements – proposed at 500 parking stalls - for parking lots to have an accessible pedestrian walkway. The AAC was heard and the bylaw was altered so that now all new parking lots with over 200 stalls will be required to have pedestrian walkways similar to the one at the Osborne Village Safeway.

The Accessibility Program is a fund used for retrofitting city facilities to enhance accessibility. Since its inception in 2002 the Accessibility Program's budget remained constant at $250,000. The program receives requests of close to a million dollars per year. To accommodate more of the demand, the AAC successfully advocated for an increase. Council approved an additional $100,000 in the 2008 Capital Budget.

In July of 2007 City Council brought in new incentive programs for multifamily housing development. The AAC, through a motion to Executive Policy Committee, moved that these programs could be an opportunity to encourage visitability and accessibility in new housing. As a result of the actions of the AAC, information about the city's Accessibility Guidelines is provided as part of the application process. We have learned that the first four projects that are using city funds will be visitable. This means they will include a zero step entrance, wider doorways and hallways and basic access to a bathroom on the main floor.



Councillor Jenny Gerbasi, Victor Pereira AAC member and Hannah walk on accessible pathway in parking lot.

Most of the new housing projects are in the downtown area. This made this year's speaker at the Accessibility Awards – Ross McGowan, CEO of CentreVenture – even more resonant as he spoke of the importance of accessibility in downtown Winnipeg.

I'd like to thank the AAC members for their dedication and hard work this year. The AAC achieved a lot in 2007 towards the goal of making Winnipeg more accessible for all people.

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Accessibility changes lives

Since 2002, the Accessibility Awards have engaged and informed the private sector about universal design and accessibility. An Accessibility Award was presented to the Simaril Residence in 2007. The story and the people involved in the renovations truly capture what universal design is all about: benefiting all citizens.

Nicki and Karen are two young women who were ready to live on their own. With support and community involvement, this milestone was made possible.

Simaril Inc is an organization providing support to adults with developmental disabilities. For twenty years, Simaril has offered residential and independent living support.

Simaril purchased a home for Nicki and Karen. Structural issues meant major renovations were needed before they could move in. The project was a collaborative, community effort involving organizations, individuals and businesses. Instructors and students from the Manitoba Residential Construction Training Institute helped fix the foundation. Businesses like Battlefield Rentals, Vipond, Kitchen Craft, Almar Distributors and Super-Lite donated labour and/or supplies.

The insulation in the attic was upgraded. A new vapour barrier and windows were installed. Details like wider hallways, an open floor plan, revamped entrances and larger windows were implemented to enhance accessibility.

Renovations took two years. Since their move in November 2006, both women are thriving. Karen is a social person who has embraced chances to engage with new people.

Nicki's independence has empowered her to take life in stride.

"It's given Nicki and Karen more independence and the ability to get out and meet new people. They can have their family or friends over to visit," says Daryn Turcotte, Executive Director of Simaril Inc.

A month before accepting the Accessibility Award, Architect Stan Hutton had a stroke that opened his eyes. "We take so many things for granted. We don't know for sure what tomorrow brings," says Stan Hutton. "Municipalities and provinces should be proactive in making sure all homes meet certain basic standards of livability. That would pay dividends for the population."

The 2007 Accessibility Awards once again recognized our community's achievements in accessibility and raised awareness about how universal design positively impacts lives.

Simaril Residence





Nicki

Karen

Recognizing leadership in Universal Design

The AAC presented Claude de Forest with the Winnipeg Accessibility Award 2007 for community leadership in Universal Design.



Claude de Forest & Yoshiko de Forest

"We have to make sure people in the city are well taken care of in the buildings we design for them so it's easy to get around," says Claude. "We have some friends who have physical disabilities so I learned from them how difficult it is."

Claude is a now-retired professor of architecture who established the Institute of Barrier Free Design at the Faculty of Architecture at the University of Manitoba. One assignment he gave his students was to navigate the campus as a person with sight, hearing or mobility challenges. "As a result, our faculty was singled out as one of the top institutions in North America," he says.

Claude's legacy is incorporating all the elements of true architecture - creating to help people function and live with dignity.

"Claude opened up the world of design that addresses all senses – touch, smell, hearing and visual – things you won't get in a typical design studio. He helped us understand these elements of the built environment and how they may impact people," says Ric Carreon, a Landscape Architect and AAC member who studied with Claude. "Claude put the stigma away from barrier free design and made it more universal."

Farewell...



Colin Mathieson is leaving the AAC after six years of active participation. For him, highlights include contributing to the drafting of the Universal Design Policy and presenting information and updates to the Executive Policy Committee. "I'm most proud of the increase of interest, awareness and civic support related to all the great things our committee has been involved in," he says. "Universal Design is a practical and efficient way to build for everyone. Life is fragile and you never know what the need will be tomorrow, or in ten years."

A world class athlete, Colin is currently in full training mode, working with the goal of qualifying for and winning at the Paralympics in Beijing. Good luck, Colin!





Accessibility@ the Library

The Winnipeg Public Library launched eLibraries Manitoba (eLM) in November 2007. This means people can download one of the approximately 1300 e-books or e-audio books in circulation. The Canadian Council for the Blind and Smart Partner of Winnipeg have recognized eLM.

"We work hard to make sure buildings are accessible with way finding signage and ease of mobility. Library facilities are civic spaces and the living room of the community. We want them to be as accessible and welcoming as possible," says Rick Walker, Manager of Library Services, Winnipeg Public Library.

Many computers in the library have zoom text capability so a user can expand the font size. Several branches offer enlarging technology where magnifiers can enlarge any print material people wish to read. You'll find talking terminal technology on the second floor of the Millennium Library.

Large print collections, audio books, CDs, DVDs, descriptive videos, closed captioned videos for the hearing impaired, CNIB talking books on cassette and daisy books are other ways the library is meeting the information needs of the diverse community it serves.

Meeting the needs of the deaf community



In 2001, Winnipeg became the first city in Canada to put a Sign Language Interpreter Policy in place. The AAC advocated for this program, which makes interpreters available to people with hearing impairments so they may access civic services and information.

Since then, both city staff and the general public have benefited from having this resource available. "If we have a deaf employee, an interpreter is called when a supervisor meets with them," says RoseAnne McKinnon, Special Needs Coordinator for Community Services with the City of Winnipeg. "Without the policy, we would not be able to serve the deaf community the way we do."

In 2004 the AAC successfully advocated to City Council to add close captioning of Council meetings as a service funded from this program.

The AAC continues to increase awareness and support for the provision of sign language interpretation services. The Leisure Guide outlines how to access the services of an interpreter. You may also access the Leisure Guide through www.winnipeg.ca.

Different Perspective

Have you ever wondered what the world would look like through the eyes of someone with tunnel vision or glaucoma? The AAC purchased a visual loss simulation kit that mimics a number of vision difficulties and levels of vision. The simulation kit will be used during experiential training sessions to help people gain a clearer understanding of how the various visual losses impact the way people move through and use City services and buildings.

Thank You!!

The AAC works with civic leaders, civic employees, organizations and individuals to ensure civic properties, information and services are more and more accessible. For each person's contribution, we would like to extend our thanks. When we work together, everyone benefits as Winnipeg continues to become more and more accessible.

This report was specially designed for easier reading!

Financial Report 2007

Revenues:

Council Funding $69,000

Expenditures:

Meeting Costs 2,199

Administrative Support.....33,077

Administrative Supplies.....7,887

Special Projects.....3,717

Communication 6,939

TOTAL 53,819

BALANCE.....15,181

Note: Balance returned to general revenue.

Committee Members 2007

Mayor Sam Katz (ex-officio)
Councillor Jenny Gerbasi (Chair)
Councillor Harvey Smith (Alternate)
Ric Carreon
Doris Koop
Derek Legge
Colin Mathieson
Liz Mitchell
Catherine Pearse
Vic Pereira
Ken Shachtay
David Tweed
Libby Zdriluk

Province of Manitoba Representatives
David Martin
John Wyndels

Committee Coordinator
Dianne Johnson

Universal Design Coordinator
Judy Redmond

City Clerk's Office
Krista Kunz
Danielle Caron

Goals for 2008...

The AAC is committed to continuously evolving and improving. As we continue to learn from what we're doing, we find ways to challenge ourselves to do things even better.

The AAC will extensively survey the community in Spring 2008 to get their input and advice about accessibility. The information we gather will help us create a strategic plan that identifies priorities and tasks for the years ahead.

Visitable Housing and Community Facilities are ongoing subcommittees of the AAC. Following the survey of the community, the AAC will revisit and reform new subcommittees based on an updated strategic plan.

The committee will continue to liaise with individuals and organizations who keep us up to date with the latest information about access issues and Universal Design. The AAC will continue its role of providing policy advice and working with the Public Service on ongoing projects that improve access for all citizens.

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