Access Advisory Committee

2011 ANNUAL REPORT



Ross's Message

Accessibility in the City of Winnipeg has come a long way since I initially sat on an Ad Hoc committee in the late 1980s that recommended the start of a committee to advise City Council on accessibility issues. We have more audible traffic signals than any city in the country and there are more curb cuts than ever before. Universal Design is a concept more people understand.

Today, accessibility challenges are different. How can we create accessibility when infrastructures have been created around vehicles and we have a strong car culture? What can we do to enhance accessibility for all users – cyclists, motorists, pedestrians, all who have varying levels of ability given persons with disabilities, seniors and people who just move a little slower?

These are the questions the Access Advisory Committee (AAC) is working with various departments and stakeholders to address. Because accessibility conversations are better had early in the planning stages of a project, we've also worked to put in greater accountability to ensure the Accessibility Standards are met with respect to civic projects.

Technology is changing the way people get their information. The launching of an updated AAC website **(www.aacwinnipeg.mb.ca)** ensures more users of differing abilities can access information. Calling out stops on Winnipeg Transit buses and the introduction of Winnipeg Transit apps is not only changing the way people access information, it's improving quality of life when people can travel more easily.

The AAC has created a strategic plan that will guide our accessibility issues that impact the citizens of Winnipeg. Thank you to the AAC's members for their commitment to enhancing accessibility in Winnipeg to the benefit of everyone.



Councillor Ross Eadie

Enhancing accessibility for active transportation

If the increasing numbers are any indication, Active Transportation – cycling, walking, rollerblading as a way to get from point A to point B – is here to stay. In fact, create a path in Winnipeg and people will use it.

A scenario like how to pass someone on a multi-use path can be a challenge for users. After all, if you do ring your bell or call out "passing on your left", what if the person is plugged into their iPod?

And what if the user has a physical disability? How do you manoeuvre a multi-use pathway if you have a visual impairment? What if you a hearing impairment?

These are questions Kevin Nixon, Active Transportation Coordinator with the City of Winnipeg, is working with the AAC to answer.

Given all the different users who have the potential to use multi-use pathways, taking this wide variety of abilities into account isn't for the faint of heart when the ultimate goal is benefitting all users. Having these factors on the radar is important and the AAC is making sure accessibility is a factor in Active Transportation planning.

"We have learnt a great deal in the last several years regarding how to mitigate conflicts on pathways," he says. "It's important to talk to all users regarding their needs on shared pathways. There are always things you don't expect."

It's an ongoing process. Along with how to separate cyclists and pedestrians on pathways, there's also a need to be consistent. That way, explains Nixon, people with visual impairments will know where to expect cyclists.

Tactile elements, different textures and contrasting colours will help guide differing users on multi-use pathways.

"We're working with the AAC to create broad guidelines and we've made some real progress," says Kevin. "We've learned a great deal through the projects we've done."

Changes to improve website accessibility



Winnipeg Archives Building

Accessing information is an integral part of living in today's world. The internet is an important way how people access information. With the majority of people having BlackBerries and iPhones, getting the information we need is literally in our hands.

The AAC mandate not only covers increasing access to city properties and services but also increasing access to

information for as many users as possible.



City Hall

That's why the AAC revamped its website. The changes reflect greater ease of use for people with visual difficulties, who were consulted in the process.

Discoveries such as how difficult it is for a screen reader to recognize a PDF file as anything but an image, how different colours can enhance readability for people with low vision and the importance of laying out the information in a way that screen readers can recognize were made.

As a result, users have three colour options to choose from when visiting the AAC website – beige, white and black with contrasting font colours. They can also enlarge the font size.

"We've looked at addressing the little things, the important things, in revamping the website," says Louis Gaudry, one of the committee members who contributed to the website redevelopment. "It's easier to navigate and much more accessible."

The newest introduction is a forum, which will allow people to ask questions about accessibility issues and receive an answer. It also allows the AAC the chance to highlight issues that people are talking about. Visit **www.aacwinnipeg.mb.ca** to check out the changes.

Debunking myths about disability



Larry Baillie Preps for Team Diabetes Marathon

A car accident nearly 20 years ago changed Larry Baillie's life. A brain injury left him unable to stand, control his emotions or speak clearly. Larry promised himself that he would recover and one day go to school and even run a marathon.

Larry kept those promises he made himself. Life with a brain injury isn't without its moments, thanks largely to misunderstanding.

"When you don't see a disability, does it exist? Absolutely," he says. "My problem is cognitive, which affects remembering, thinking and perceiving."

There are negative myths and stereotypes about disabilities, he explains. People seem to have very specific ideas about what a disabled person is and isn't and much of this understanding is wrong. "I don't think people want to be discriminatory. I believe it's lack of education."

That's one reason why Larry decided to become an advocate for persons with disabilities by becoming a social worker who specializes in disability issues: it's an opportunity to help people understand "invisible disability".

The opportunity to make a difference, learn more about the policy end of things and the chance to change things from within were reasons Larry decided to join the AAC. It's his third year with the committee and Larry is proud of the fact that the committee is getting things done. The Accessibility Awards recognize good work in the community and help raise awareness about the importance of accessibility. Examples like enhancing accessibility on multi-use pathways and the Osborne Street Bridge and stops being called out on Winnipeg Transit buses will benefit all people.

What most people fail to realize, says Larry is that one day we're all going to benefit from the enhancements to accessibility. We're all getting older, which can negatively impact our mobility and vision. The average person is what the disability community calls ***"temporarily able bodied".***

Larry sums up what motivates him: "Change is scary. It scares everyone. But I just want to be treated like everyone else."

Improvements increase accessibility

What do longer transfer benches, curb ramps, automatic door openers, accessible entrances, detectable warning surfaces, voice technologies for elevators, lower counters, wet chairs and easy ladder entry systems (in pools) have in common?

They're all projects that were supported by the City of Winnipeg's Accessibility Program fund.

The projects represent the annual budget of $350,000 set aside to retrofit civic properties to enhance accessibility for a wider range of people and abilities.

Since the Accessibility Program fund's inception in 2003, total of $2,850,000 has been allocated by City Council to improve accessibility.

Leaders in accessibility



Gail Finkel with Mayor Sam Katz

At the Accessibility Awards, the AAC was pleased to recognize leaders in accessibility: Gail Finkel and Dave Wardrop (representing Winnipeg Transit).

Gail Finkel's career is based on principles of universal design: that an environment needs to enable people to be comfortable and participate to the best of their ability. Along with writing about the topic of universal design and advocating for accessible facilities, Gail contributed to drafting the Winnipeg Universal Design Policy. This policy was adopted in 2001 and has set the tone for the way the City of Winnipeg's information, properties and services are accessed. Gail has also worked to redevelop and update a section

of the Manitoba Building Code to reflect today's accessibility practices.



Dave Wardrop Director of Winnipeg Transit with Mayor Sam Katz

Dave Wardrop has been instrumental in incorporating universal design features into buses, bus stations, signage, driver sensitivity training, web-sites and the new southwest corridor Bus Rapid Transit. The new low floor buses could become a reality for the entire fleet within a few years. LED displays inside the bus and at stops and audio announcements have been well-received by the community for the ways it helps persons with vision or hearing impairments travel with greater freedom and confidence. The changes for which Dave has advocated over many years have enhanced safety and made using Winnipeg Transit easier for a wide variety of users – including seniors, and parents with strollers– as well as the disabled community.

Creating a commitment to accessibility



Barber House Restoration Project

The Accessibility Awards have come a long way since their inception in 2002. This year, 21 projects were nominated by the community.



Barber House

The AAC committee interviewed representatives from each nomination and made site visits to experience the accessibility features these projects offer. After this process, five awards, one honourable mention and two special recognition awards were presented.

And the winners are:

- Barber House Restoration (BridgmanCollaborative Architecture)
- Sinclair Park Community Centre (Harold Funk Architect)
- St Amant Residential Accessible Housing (Prairie Architects)
- West Broadway Neighbourhood Centre Community Garden (City of Winnipeg)
- Winnipeg Harvest (PSA Studio Architects)

Raising the main floor to grade, a level entry front door, a roll in shower, colour coded accessible washrooms, tactile warnings on ramps, stairways and directional indicators…these are just some of the ways accessibility was prioritized in these award-winning projects. These details have the power to change lives



St. Amant Accessible Housing



Winnipeg Harvest: Dave Northcott Executive Director with Volunteers, Staff, and Architects

through inclusion. An honourable mention award was presented to Windsor Park United Church MMP

Architects) for accessible renovations. An accessible parking lot, electrified doors at the entry, a ramp to the choir loft, accessible washrooms (that include raised buttons and tactile indicators), hearing assist technology and large print newsletters help make this place of worship accessible by a wide variety of users.

What is Universal Design?



James Richardson International Airport

Universal design is inclusive, easy and clear, safe and comfortable. It works for a range of users, from the young, inexperienced user to a person with visual or hearing loss. It reduces risk and it's comfortable to use. It considers using the space efficiently with minimal physical effort, thus reducing fatigue.

Universal design puts people first. It provides equal opportunities for people to participate and engage, with or without disabilities, regardless of life circumstances.

And what does universal design look like? The newly constructed Sinclair Park Community Centre is a very good example. Along with elements that enhance physical access – such as wider entries, accessible washrooms – sensory details like tactile warnings help provide direction for people with visual impairments. Colour and natural light have been strategically integrated to help people find their way.

Winnipeg's first accessible community garden encompasses the heart of universal design: inclusivity. Thanks to accessible ground surfaces and other features like two-tier raised planters, and an accessible water supply, not only can a person living with a disability enjoy the beautiful garden – they can contribute to growing a sustainable garden, either on their own or with their family. Universal design and accessibility help make communities healthier and stronger.



James Richardson International Airport

Another example of universal design is the James Richardson International Airport. Features such as rounded or angled corners, elevators, check-in and service counters

at an accessible height, illuminated handrails, treads and walking surfaces, TTY payphones and finishes that reduce glare. These are just some of the elements that have been incorporated to enhance accessibility for all.

Click here to read more about Universal Design: **http://winnipeg.ca/ppd/Universal_Design.stm**

Click here to read the City of Winnipeg's Universal Design Guiding Principles: **http://winnipeg.ca/ppd/planning/pdf_folder/UDesignGuidingPrinciples.pdf**

Click here to read the City of Winnipeg Accessibility Design Standards: **http://winnipeg.ca/ppd/UD/PDF/May%202011%20revised%20WADS%20Final.pdf**

What we plan to work on



The committee recently participated in a strategic planning session that helped identify our key priorities to focus on. As part of our overall strategic plan for 2011-2012 we will continue to:

- review and update the City of Winnipeg Accessibility Design Standards.
- continue to review and participate in most major City of Winnipeg capital projects to ensure the Winnipeg Accessibility Design Standards are being implemented.
- meet with provincial ministers to foster commitment on joint projects, including new and sustainable legislation on accessibility.
- support the development and delivery of education about accessibility for a variety of groups.
- advocate for online accessibility for a variety of stakeholder groups by working to revamp the AAC and the City of Winnipeg websites.
- Highlight the importance of Universal Design throughout the year and hold an annual Accessibility Awards Ceremonies and Celebration.
- build and expand relationships and partnerships with stakeholder service groups, educational institutions, and professionals in the field.
- work within the "OurWinnipeg" Key Directives to ensure accessibility is sustainable and prevalent in all major projects and programs with the City of Winnipeg.
- conduct another Community Consultation opportunity for the general public to stimulate input on the Access Advisory Committee Strategic Plan for 2013-2014.



2012 Access Advisory Committee Members



(Front Row L-R) *Sandy Popham, Liz Mitchell, Chris Sobkowicz, Janet Hunt;* ***(Back Row L-R)*** *Councillor Ross Eadie, Councillor Devi Sharma, Judy Herscovitch, Brenda Sklar, Shannon Keys, Kenneth Anderson, Louis Gaudry, Judy Redmond; Missing: Larry Baillie, Colleen Waters, and Natalie Pirson*

2011 Access Advisory Committee Members

Mayor Sam Katz (Ex-officio)
Councillor Ross Eadie (Chair)
Councillor Jenny Gerbasi (Jan. to Oct.)
Councillor Devi Sharma (Nov. to Dec.)

Larry Baillie
Louis Gaudry
Janet Hunt
Jacqueline Jasinski
Shannon Keys
Bob Manhard (Jan. to April)
Natalie Pirson
Sandy Popham
Brenda Sklar
Sam Unrau

Province of Manitoba Representative
Colleen Waters (Disabilities Issues Office)

Committee Coordinator
Chris Sobkowicz

City of Winnipeg Universal Design Coordinator
Judy Redmond

City Clerk's Department
Krista Kunz

The AAC would like to thank our outgoing members for their commitment, passion and interest in accessibility issues.

Financial Report

Revenues

Council Funding	$ 69,000.00

Expenditures

Meeting Costs	$ 5,748.00
Administrative Support	$ 40,000.00
Administrative Supplies	$ 5,961.00
Special Projects	$ 1,207.00
Communication	$ 9,384.00
Total	$ 62,300.00
Balance	$ 6,700.00

* This annual report is available in French in Braille electronically on our wbsite at **www.aacwinnipeg.mb.ca**. Please contact us to receive your copy in alternate formatting.

Contact Us

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