2013 Annual Report

Access Advisory Committee

Winnipeg

WHAT DO WE DO...

...we advise City of Winnipeg leaders on accessibility for civic properties, information and services and recommend best practices in Universal Design while building relationships with the community.

A Message from Councillor Eadie



It's been a year of reflection and planning for the Access Advisory Committee (AAC). On the cusp of our 20th anniversary, it's the perfect time to look at what we've done, where we are and where we want to go and do as a committee.

The AAC was a part of the provincial legislative process for the Accessibility for Manitobans Act, which was moved through in 2013. We presented to the province and had a chance to submit a response to what they were proposing. We were able to provide our perspective and expertise – given the city has had a universal design policy since 2001. As acknowledged by Minister Jennifer Howard, the City of Winnipeg is a good example of progressive standards guidelines to follow, especially in the built environment.

It was a helpful process to participate in. We realized that we are on target with our policy guidelines with respect to Universal Design. Right now the City of Winnipeg is doing these because we believe in the importance of access for all, but the province will soon make enhancing accessibility the law. It will not be optional to create accessibility, which reflects a significant shift.

Given the strong relationships the AAC has established within the civic structure, we will continue to build on what works: consulting on capital projects and providing our input when accessibility issues are brought to the city's attention.

The major renovation of Main from Hartford to Jefferson was a learning experience for us about what worked and what doesn't. Working with city administration, we were able to solidify a good policy moving towards truncated domes – the warning surfaces on curb cuts. There is money to accomplish that and the goal is to start with intersections on all regional and collector streets.

Similar to the installation of audible traffic signals in the city – whenever there is major

Winnipeg is a leader in accessibility but there is always more work to be done.

renovation of an intersection – we will start to add warning surfaces to intersections. The city has now established that in 10 years, we will get to the point where all intersections have audible signals. We will continue to work with administration, who sets the criteria for priorities and installation.

Consultation and relationship building were key themes for the committee in 2013. The committee deepened its consultation with the community and persons with disabilities. Through our conversations, we are better able to understand what community priorities and challenges are, and report those back to the Executive Policy Committee.

Winnipeg is a leader in accessibility but there is always more work to be done. Education, implementation...these both require dedication and consistent effort to ensure people's understanding and awareness around the importance of accessibility continues to expand. Accessibility enhances quality of life, health and wellness and benefits each and every citizen of Winnipeg. The AAC will continue to work with city leaders and administration to ensure civic information, properties and services are accessible by everyone. ■



Fast Forward 20 Years

Eadie considers what accessibility

If Ross Eadie was to travel ahead 20 years in time, his hope for accessibility starts with greater awareness. People understand the need for physically accessible spaces on some level, but he would like to see perception grow and expand too.

“Part of it is about what people with disabilities are capable to do for employment,” he says, referring to the City of Winnipeg as an accessible employer. “I’d like to see there be more ability for people to work.”

That means physical environments wouldn’t be a barrier to employment for persons with disabilities, but also that people could also see beyond desk jobs for persons with disabilities.

“We’ve done our assessment of the city hall campus,” he says. “We know where the accessibility issues are and can plan to address access for every building.”

Eadie also hopes to see even stronger relationships and consultation with city departments, who in 20 years have an even greater understanding of accessibility. Moreover, they can see and monitor the progress of projects where accessibility are just a given.

But most of all, addressing accessibility concerns immediately - if there’s an accessibility issue that’s brought to light, important questions like how do you deal with this will be asked and then answered – will remain an integral part of the way accessibility keeps growing. In 2033, perhaps accessibility upgrades or renovations won’t be necessary because every civic property could offer barrier free access.

Active transportation is a bigger part of our lives in two decades, Eadie muses. And it’s safer for people of all ages and abilities. Safe and clearly marked active transportation trails have been developed throughout the city for all to enjoy.

The maintaining of streets isn’t a barrier to accessibility in the future, says Eadie, who hopes that challenges like snow clearing have clearer solutions in 20 years.

might look like in two decades time

Every intersection in the city has audible transit signals and detectable warning surfaces like truncated domes. Although 2014 was a year where every city bus had low floor access, in 2033 bus stops will be even more accessible, allowing everyone to move safely and freely.

The need to push a button to walk across the street might be a thing of the distant past with automatic detection keeping pedestrians safe as they cross the street. Technology has advanced to the point where it is predictive, regardless of what direction you're moving in. ■



Finding answers and solutions

Survey reveals how to prioritize APS installation

The goal is easy but not simple: audible pedestrian signals (APS) at all Winnipeg intersections by 2023.

How to accomplish that with budgetary restrictions? Which intersections are priorities? How is that determined? These are just some of the complex issues the Public Works Department was faced with.

That's why they decided to do a survey, explains Michael Cantor.

"After determining the relevant prioritization criteria, we sat down with stakeholders to come up with the weighting for each one," says Michael Cantor, Traffic Signals Engineer with the City of Winnipeg. "We asked users and instructors, persons with disabilities and stakeholder groups to help us determine a plan for the next 10 years."

There are two elements that emerged as ways to determine priorities, thanks to the feedback from these people: crossing demand (how many pedestrians are looking to cross the street) and environmental complexity (how long it takes to cross the street and what might make it more difficult for a person with low vision to cross the street).

Before the survey, Cantor explains, the criteria for making decisions about priority intersections was different. "Consensus between people was very high and helped us understand which intersections need to be equipped first," he says.

The information helped them determine which of the 37 intersections will be scheduled to have APS installed each year. It has an annual price tag of around $600,000 to enhance accessibility for a wider variety of users.

"We're excited we have the list. Before we were relying on capital projects to help us install audible pedestrian signals," he says. "We will still give priority to requests but it's very convenient to have a work plan for the next 10 years. It also allows us the chance to explain to people who ask what year a certain intersection will have APS installed."

to tough questions

About the volume

A challenge that remains ongoing in the conversation around APS is speaker volume. For the users who require audible cues to cross the street, hearing the different chirps is important.

But how do you balance that with nearby residents, who consider the chirps noise pollution?

The latest solution to this challenge is how the speakers are aimed, Cantor explains. "We've found that aiming the speakers towards the user instead of the crossing itself gave us the opportunity to decrease the volume but not the level of service," he says.

Another change is the colour of the speakers. Throughout the installation process, it was discovered that a contrasting colour for the speakers (meaning it's not the same colour as the pole) is helpful for people with low vision. That's why yellow has been chosen as a colour – with consistent placement and colour, people with low vision will be able to determine there is APS at an intersection, further helping them navigate the streets of Winnipeg safely. ■



The Access Awards are

Enhanced communication and an updated event are part of rebranding the Access Awards

ACCESS AWARDS

Excellence in Universal Design and Accessibility

kicking it up a notch

With the committee's 20th anniversary in sight and the 11th anniversary of the Accessibility Awards, conversations around kicking the awards up a notch started to take place.

How could the awards be positioned to help raise awareness around accessibility issues? Did receiving an award have status tied to it? If not, how could status for receiving an award be created? And how could the event itself be even more memorable and meaningful for those receiving the awards?

These are just some of the questions that Dean Smallwood, Principle at Bounce Design, and his team considered.

While listening to the client's needs is part of the team's regular process, paying attention to nuances that merged both style and function for a variety of users was even more important on this project.

"Traditionally, incorporating universal design principles is not the first consideration of many designers," says Smallwood. "It was exciting for us to have that as a focus on this project. We kept asking ourselves if our design solutions were speaking to the constituency of the project and who might we be excluding. In working with the committee, our questions and their feedback made the things we came up with even more important, and our design solutions even stronger."

The Access Awards will be more of an Academy Awards style event – bigger, and more prestigious.

Asking why was an important part of the process and Smallwood jokes he was like a three year old with the question. "We ask that of all our clients. What are the real reasons you do it this way? Is it the way it's always been done or is it the best solution?" he says.

The creative and consulting process started with six concepts being presented to the awards sub-committee. While rationale is common in the graphics world, each concept and visual needs to have a powerful impact and speak for themselves, without detailed explanation. The sub-committee narrowed the field to three concepts and each was tweaked based on feedback.

After more conversation, two logo options were presented to the full committee for consideration.

The end result? The rebranding of the awards. Along with a new logo and name – the Access Awards – the event itself will have a makeover for 2014.

"In the past it has been a lunchtime event in the city hall lobby. It will be more of an Academy Awards style event – bigger, more prestigious so on the designer side we hope to entice them to be more involved," he says.

The award itself is also being carefully considered. It needs to be tactile, readable from a distance and within the committee's budget. At the same time, displaying a visually pleasing Access Award offers opportunities for conversation and education around access issues. The best format in which to update the Access Award is Bounce's current task and challenge.

"We are considering displayability. Can we create a conversation piece that the award recipient can display that will be a marketing piece for them as well as further the conversation about the benefits of addressing accessibility issues?" considers Smallwood.

Strategically using existing resources and tools is the thinking when it comes to the call for nominations. “We are in the process of developing an email campaign to communicate the changes to people – lists of building owners, designers, stakeholder groups – to tell them how to nominate someone and why,” he says. “We’ll also be explaining that the awards won’t be preannounced this year – those who are nominated and the winners will be announced at a celebratory event.”

That’s a first. The same is true of the fact that the event in 2014 will be a paid evening event. It will feature a retrospective aspect, explains Smallwood, featuring how far we’ve come in the past 20 years. “We’ll highlight best practices then and now,” he says, “and celebrate past winners of the award.” ■

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Improving

A clear picture of challenges – and suggestions for improvement – from the community.

If you think you had a rough time navigating the winter of 2013, imagine what the experience would have been like for someone with mobility issues. Or a senior.

That's why a survey was completed during 2013…to see how winter mobility can be improved. Because in Winnipeg, from November to April, mobility is compromised thanks to snowy and/or icy sidewalks that make manoeuvring a wheeled mode of transportation – wheelchair or scooter, for example – difficult.

What does that mean? Does it change the choices a person makes or the support they receive? How?

The survey was completed by email or over the phone and focused on five areas: products and technology, the environment, support and relationships, attitudes and services, systems and policies. Ninety-nine people ranging in age from under 12 to over 80 responded to the survey. Of the respondents, 81% were from Winnipeg.

winter mobility

Interesting findings:

- people go out half of the time during the winter months when compared with summer months
- winter excursions are often prioritized based on what's necessary or what's an emergency
- 99 per cent of people reported winter-related accessibility issues with sidewalks and/or streets (not cleared well, not cleared at all, sidewalks not present or sidewalk conditions not safe)
- over half (55%) said they do not receive the additional support they need during the winter)
- responses to address winter accessibility issues indicated responsibility to improve the situation is shared between government, transportation, the community, stakeholder groups, health care professionals, private transportation services, and manufacturers and product vendors
- 75% of people who participated reported experiencing problems with transportation during the winter

Recommendations:

- More dedicated wheelchair space on fixed-route public transit buses
- Longer hours, more availability and greater flexibility for HandiTransit
- More access to accessible transportation for recreation and errands
- More wheelchair accessible taxi services
- Faster and better snow clearing
- Better condition to sidewalks and curb cuts
- Standard signage for accessible parking spots
- Having accessible street parking and priority snow clearing available for renters
- Address sidewalk accessibility first, then transportation issues ■

A plan for detectable warning surface tiles

AAC supported Public Works recommendations re: installation



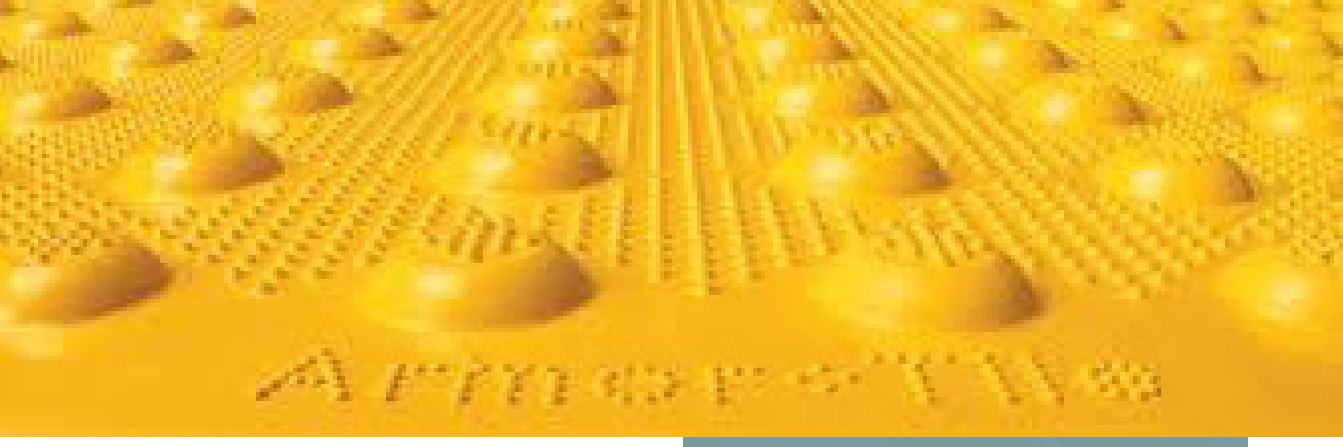
Detectable warning surface tiles – the things at street corners that look like pieces of yellow lego – are a helpful tool for pedestrians with vision challenges as they navigate Winnipeg streets.

First trialed in 2006, detectable warning surface tiles have come a long way. In 2008, yellow was selected as the standard colour. Since 2006, different types of detectable warning surfaces have been trialed. Some with more success than others. The surface applied warning surface tiles, for example, were not suitable for Winnipeg's climate. They also didn't withstand snow clearing and some even posed a safety risk.

In late 2012, installing detectable warning surface tiles became a part of the Standard Construction Specifications. That means that with new construction projects, detectable warning surface tiles are incorporated as part of the project.

To date, approximately 275 of intersections on regional roadways* of Winnipeg's 2300 intersections have detectable warning surface tiles installed. To complete the remaining intersections through the Capital Works Construction Program comes with a price tag of over $8 million. The cost for Winnipeg's 4800 collector streets via this program would be about $16 million.

***See a list of regional roadways here: www.winnipeg.ca/publicworks/Streets/SnowRoutes.asp**



During 2013, a means to prioritize the installation of detectable warning surface tiles was determined. The AAC worked with administration and supported the creation of a plan – similar to the one created for audible pedestrian signals – for the installation of detectable warning surface tiles at Winnipeg intersections.

Public Works recommends that detectable warning surface tiles be installed on new, reconstruction and rehabilitation roadways on regional roadways and collector streets (including new collector streets in developments). It was also recommended that if only one side of the street is being worked on that those sides of the street receive tiles – and that meridians only receive tiles if they are under construction. ■



Did you KNOW?

In 2008, the estimated cost of installation of one tile with removal and replacement of concrete was between $1500 to $2000. In 2012, average cost for installation was $431.67 per tiles with 8-16 tiles per intersection.





Voting is accessible and

Elections accessible for a wide variety of users

The AAC has worked with civic administration and made recommendations about how to improve accessibility for the people of Winnipeg.

With an upcoming civic election, making voting accessible for as many users as possible has been a process that's involved a number of different elements: the physical environment, services and technology.

Every venue has a site inspection form that considers accessibility elements of potential voting locations. Elements like accessible entrances – that means entrances have level access or ramps to help people who use wheeled or motorized devices move around a little easier – are the first step. Once a person is inside an election venue, accessible signage –



inclusive...

We've come a long way

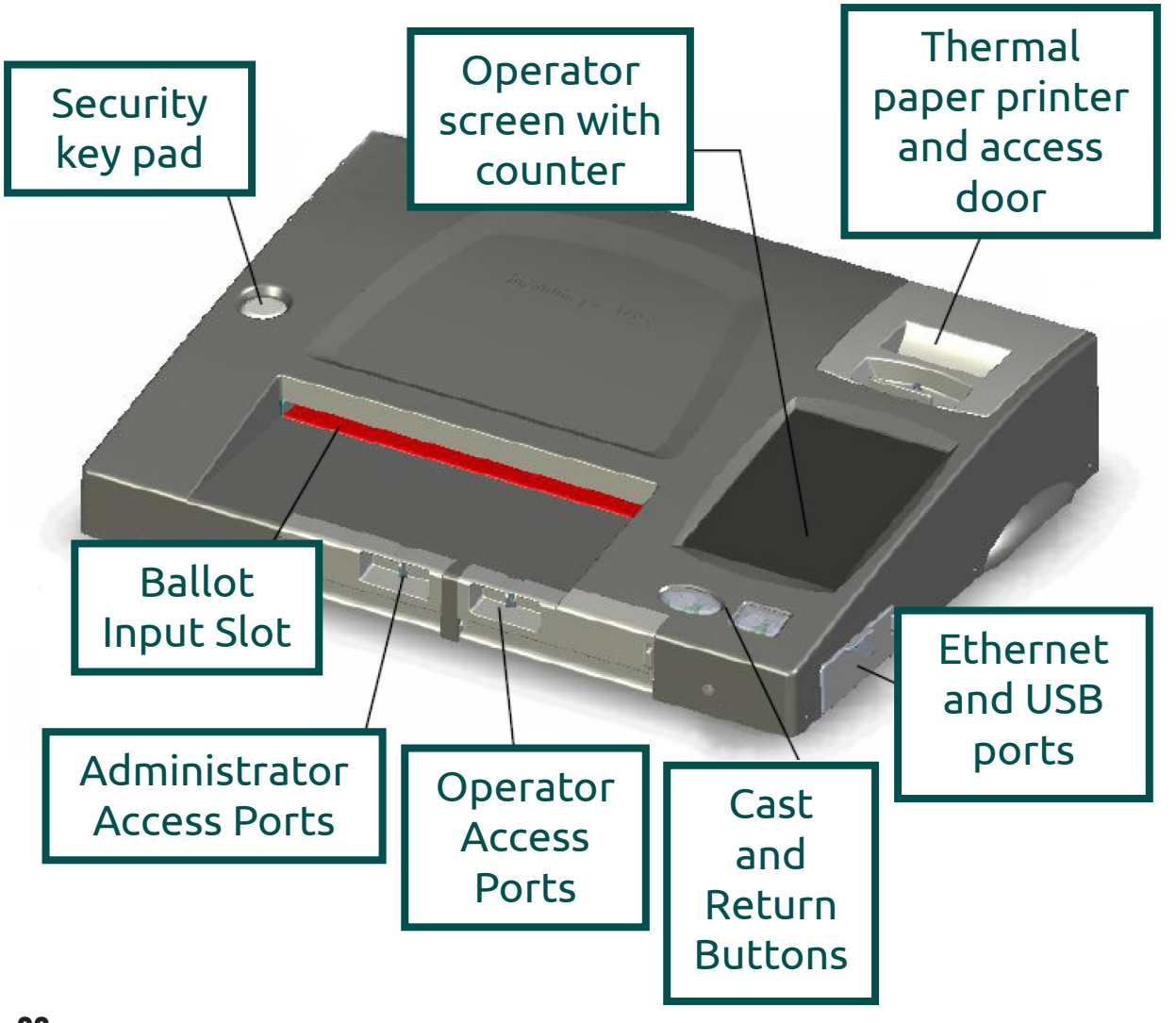
contrasting coloring, textured signage that is large enough to easily recognize and interpret – is another important element to help direct and guide people. Designated parking for persons with disabilities, automatic door openers, accessible washrooms and wider doorways continue to enhance a person's visit to an election venue.

Elements like clear pathways and steps with contrasting edges and have a no-slip surface enhance accessibility and also enhance safety in an election venue.

Services have also been enhanced to help offer voters a comfortable, supportive environment to cast their choice, regardless of their abilities. For starters, the election manual has clear instructions about how people working polling stations can help to support an accessible voting experience for voters. That involves offering someone the option of voting independently or with support. Advance polling stations and the chance to vote by mail further enhance the choices of voters, as do having Braille templates and Braille ballot listing.

Technology is being used to help voters with not only site but also mobility challenges. An Audio voting system called ImageCast Precinct with Ballot Marking Device offers an option for people with visual impairments, but also for people who are not able to mark a ballot, a sip and puff option is available.

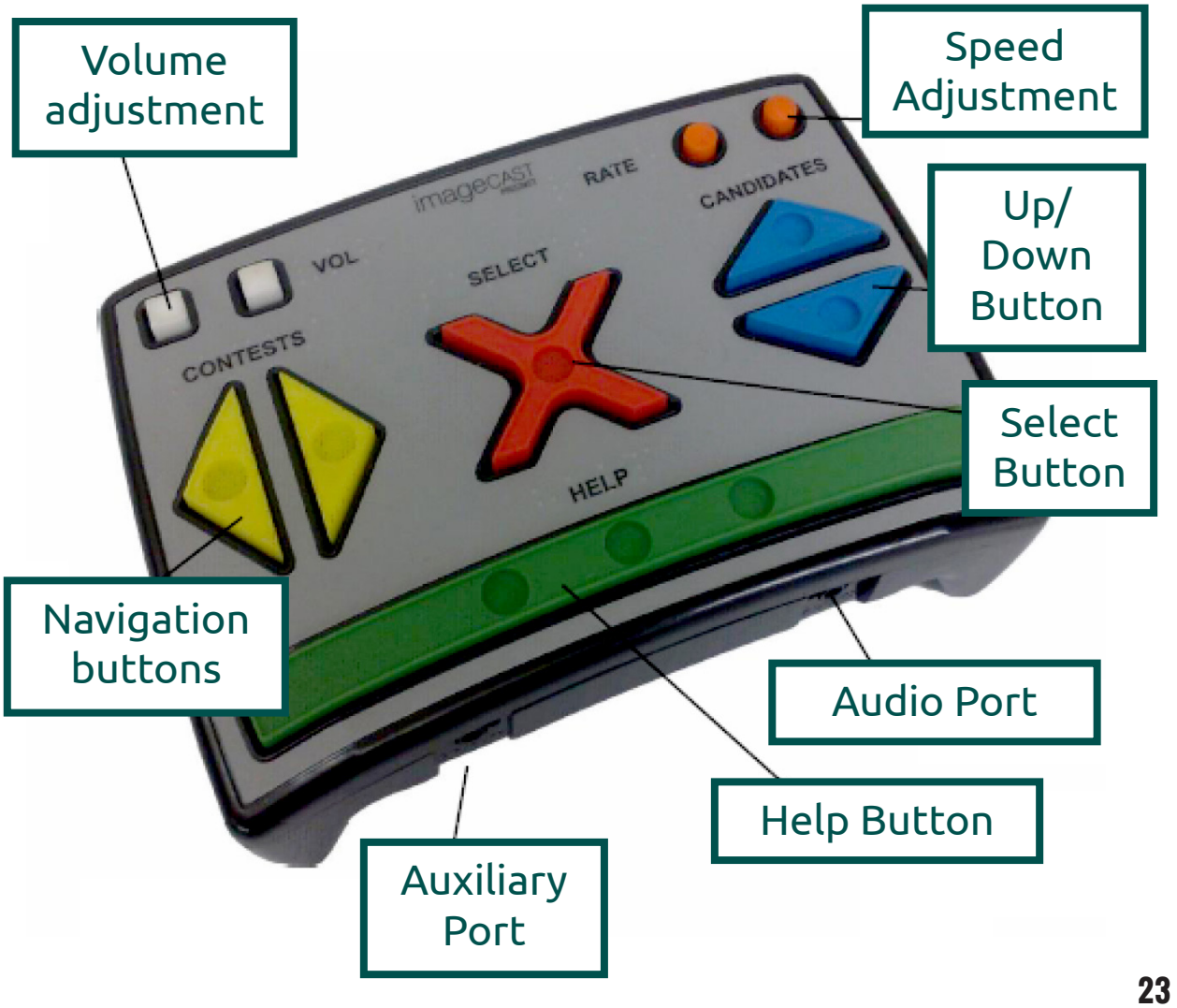
The Ballot Marking Device



The device sits on a table, has three components: the unit, the audio-tactile interface and headphones, external printer for audio session ballot.

Services are integrated as election officials need to work closely with an individual to help determine how to best facilitate their voting experience and set them up with the appropriate options for their situation. ■

The Audio-Tactile Interface (ATI)



Making things more accessible

Accessibility fund updates civic infrastructure, bit by bit

It's simply amazing to see a lot of the city's older infrastructure improved over the years to meet the current Accessibility Design Standards. We've come a long way since the introduction of the Accessibility Fund in 2002.

One of the goals of the fund is to improve the accessibility of existing civic buildings and outside environments, which makes it more possible to provide safe, comfortable and equitable services to the citizens and visitors of Winnipeg. This program also allows the opportunity to provide a safe and accessible workplace, which means the city can attract a more diverse and representative workforce.

Every year, the City of Winnipeg selects a number of projects to update facilities to current accessibility standards. One might think that with an annual budget of over $350,000 that we should be getting closer in catching up. The truth is that applications come in at an alarming rate every year, and the requested amounts usually surpass the available funding.

The fund is meant for upgrading or retrofitting existing buildings, and cannot be used for new construction. That can sometimes make it difficult to decide when funding comes up short on some new projects. However, the prioritization usually never fails.

The Accessibility Fund is overseen by Judy Redmond, the Universal Design Coordinator for the City of Winnipeg, and is supported by a small steering committee which involves representatives from relevant departments and the Access Advisory Committee.

Some of the projects are small and completed without the community even noticing – like the installation of longer transfer benches at our pools, continuous implementation of our yellow tactile detectable warning surfaces at our curb ramps, implementation of automatic door openers, voice technologies for elevators, wet chairs and easy ladder entries in our pools, Audible pedestrian signals, as well as web based accessibility upgrades for everyone to register for

recreational programs or review our council decision making process daily.

Others are major project renovations such as the total retrofitting of the Margaret Grant Pool, Kildonan Park Pool, City Hall outdoor ramps, Century Arena, enhancements at various community centres, and at many of our libraries throughout the city.

There is no doubt that the City of Winnipeg is serious about its accessibility, and the Access Advisory Committee is proud of that fact. ■

Did you KNOW?

Since 2002, the Accessibility Fund has allocated $3,550,000 to improve accessibility to existing properties.

As a regular lined item in the budget, new construction projects plan to incorporate accessibility features.



We're on track

The AAC completed a strategic plan for 2013 and has accomplished much of what we set out to do.

Raising awareness through education

Education is an integral part of the work the committee does. With each conversation, each email, each meeting, each presentation, and each trade show display offers an opportunity exists to continue a deeper conversation around accessibility and universal design. The AAC is committed to continuing to help people further understand the importance of accessible information, property and services for a variety of users, that ultimately benefits everyone. The AAC continues to lobby for a mandatory course for key City of Winnipeg staff to raise disability awareness around the use of the Universal Design Policy.

Building partnership with the Province of Manitoba

The AAC played an active and integral role in supporting and inputting feedback in helping the Province of Manitoba develop its very first Manitobans with Disabilities Act in December 2013. In the next few years, the AAC will again play a very important role, in sharing our thoughts on Accessibility Design Standards for the built environments, and making further recommendations on Best Practices in their critical targeted streams of service.

Development

Innovation and creativity are required as the committee finds new ways to do things that reduces administrative costs and environmental impact. A user-friendly website (www.aacwinnipeg.mb.ca), email campaigns that make the most of an established network of contacts and stakeholders, discussing how to use social media (like Twitter – include @handle) in ways that help the AAC educate and communicate with a broader audience are elements that help facilitate these goals.

Input on major City of Winnipeg Projects

The AAC participated in providing input on the projects that made the headlines, and ones that didn't… like:

- Rapid Transit Corridor Planning
- garbage collection
- Investors Field
- the Active Transportation buffered bike lanes on Pembina Highway
- playgrounds
- Handi-Transit
- new fare boxes on buses
- changes to election polling stations
- Winnipeg housing policies
- the unique use of pedestrian and cycle signals like the crossing of Osborne just north of the Osborne Bridge
- the ongoing need for increasing retrofitting dollars to improve accessibility in some of our older facilities

The AAC reviewed the City Hall Accessibility Audit and provided a detailed prioritized list of the necessary retrofits required. This was presented to the Civic Accommodations Department for implementation. To date, that committee sees a number of the projects listed scheduled for upgrading in the near future, and are glad to report that some already have been completed.

Our Winnipeg

This action plan is at the heart of AAC conversations, planning and how we approach making sure accessibility is a focus in civic projects. ■

Up ahead...

Providing recommendations around the awareness of universal design and accessibility is a key role of the AAC. In 2014, the committee's 20th year, a celebration recognizing excellence in universal design will be a highlight with the revamped, rebranded Access Awards. Hosting a community consultation that will engage the community in the conversation around accessibility will help provide the AAC with community feedback and direction about what our priorities need to be.

Building on what works, we'll continue to develop existing resources – the website, established relationships – to share expertise and further understanding of accessibility issues. ■

Budget:

Financial Report 2013

Revenues

Council Funding	$69,000.00

Expenditures

Meeting Costs	$5,456.05
Administrative Support	$40,609.62
Administrative Supplies	$2,902.23
Awards	$10,000.00
Website	$1,240.00
Communication	$3,240.00
Special Projects	$1,175.17
Total	$64,623.07

Surplus/Balance $4,376.93



2013 Access Advisory Committee:

Ross Eadie **Chair**

Devi Sharma **Councillor**

Kenneth Anderson

Larry Baillie

Louis Gaudry

Doug Gordon

Judy Herscovitch

Elizabeth Mitchell

Shannon Keyes

Natalie Pirson

Sandy Popham

Jacqueline Robertshaw

Colleen Watters

Chris Sobkowicz
Committee Coordinator

Judy Redmond
Universal Design Coordinator

Rochelle Viray
City Clerks Department

Andrea Bodie
Annual Report
Words… A Little Touch of Magic!



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

Contact Us

Access Advisory Committee
510 Main Street
Council Building, Lower Level
Winnipeg, MB R3B 1B9
Phone: 204-986-8345
Fax: 204-947-3452
TTY: 204-261-7424
www.aacwinnipeg.mb.ca

ONE DAY...

we're all going to benefit from the enhancements to ACCESSIBILITY.