

Town of Annapolis Royal Accessibility Plan

March 2022



- **Welcome**

Welcome Statement

The Accessibility Plan was developed by the Accessibility Advisory Committee and the Town Council.

The committee has reviewed all town policies and by-laws, communications, and conducted extensive inventories on multiple sites in order to advise Council on how best to reach the provincial accessibility goals and to make our community more inclusive. This plan represents a significant step in achieving these goals, but it is still an early step in the process. From here, a concrete action plan, with benchmarks and target dates, will be developed to guide the improvement process.

This stage of the plan defines the Town's commitment to improving accessibility, the areas of focus, and provides an overview of recent achievements and areas in need of improvement. It has been approved by Council and represents the foundation of our work.

- **Commitment Statement**

Our goal is that all aspects of our community be accessible to everyone. We envision a community where all residents and visitors are able to live spontaneously and partake of its amenities. This means having the expectation for all to be able to;

- Independently move in our community safely and without hinderance

- have equitable access to services and programs
- enjoy community features such as trails, parks, and pools
- participate in municipal processes
- be engaged by our local government

While it is acknowledged that achieving these goals is a process. We commit to this process, and to continual review and update where required, until these goals are achieved.



Areas of Focus

In accordance with the priorities defined in the Nova Scotia Accessibility Act of 2017 and the Government of Nova Scotia Accessibility Plan 2018-2021, the Town of Annapolis Royal will undertake to improve accessibility in (the):

- (1) Built Environment,
- (2) Information and Communications,
- (3) Employment,
- (4) Goods and Services, and
- (5) Transportation

The goal is to provide equitable access and engagement to residents, visitors, and employees to all aspects of our community. This plan defines our commitment and lays out a structured and standards-based approach to achieving these goals. Overviews for each area of focus are provided by the Minister's Annual Report on Accessibility

(https://novascotia.ca/accessibility/docs/Ministers_Annual_Report_of_Accessibility_2019-2020.pdf)

Definitions

Accessibility Act (2017): The provincial law enacted to achieve accessibility by preventing and removing barriers for people with disabilities. The law defines the role and responsibilities of the Accessibility Directorate and the Accessibility Advisory Board, and addresses standards, compliance, and enforcement.

(nslegislature.ca/sites/default/files/legc/statutes/accessibility.pdf)

AAC: Accessibility Advisory Committee.

Accessibility Lens: An Accessibility Lens is a tool for identifying and clarifying issues affecting persons with disabilities used by policy developers and analysts to assess and address the impact of all initiatives (policies, programs or decisions) on persons with disabilities. It is also a resource in creating policies and programs reflective of the rights and needs of persons with disabilities.

Auditory: Related to hearing or sensing sound.

Barrier: Something that makes it harder for some people to participate. Nova Scotia's Accessibility Act defines a barrier as "anything that hinders or challenges the full and effective participation in society of persons with disabilities, including a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, an information or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy, or a practice."

CSA: Canadian Standards Association

Disability: As defined in Nova Scotia's Accessibility Act: "a physical, mental, intellectual, learning or sensory impairment, including an

episodic disability that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders an individual's full and effective participation in society.”

EMO: Emergency Management Office.

Equitable/equity: A commitment to fairness. Equitable access is different from equal access. Equality means everybody is treated the same; equity means everybody is treated fairly, based on their needs and abilities. Equity recognizes and values differences, removing systemic barriers and accommodating individual differences, as needed.

Government of Nova Scotia Accessibility Plan: A multi-year plan setting specific priorities and commitments for achieving accessibility within the Government of Nova Scotia. The first plan was published in 2018 and covers the years 2018-2021. (novascotia.ca/accessibility/plan)

Meaningful: In the context of our Accessibility work, the term meaningful is used to ensure the efforts being made are deemed valuable by those affected by the efforts.

Infrastructure: The “underlying structure” that makes a place livable and keeps its systems working (e.g., roads, sewers, clean water, electricity, and more).

NSFM: Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities.

Pedestrian: A person walking outside or using an assistive device outside to travel at a walking speed.

Plain language: Clear, conversational communication that makes sense to the intended audience. The goal of plain language is to

communicate so clearly that the intended audience can easily find what they need, understand what they find, and use the information (plainlanguagenetwork.org)

Prescribed: Means “prescribed in the Accessibility Act General Regulations.” The Accessibility Act enables the government to use the regulations to identify which organizations must comply with certain requirements. These requirements include forming an Accessibility Advisory Committee and developing an accessibility plan within one year. The use of the word “prescribed” in legislation is intended to give wide authority for regulations to be made that set down a specific rule or direction.

Retrofit: To add features that were not included in the original design.

RHF: Rick Hansen Foundation.

RHFAC: Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification. (Learn more at www.rickhansen.com/become-accessible/rating-certification.)

Tactile: Related to the sense of touch.

WCAG: Web Content Accessibility Guidelines. (Learn more at www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag)



Built Environment

Our starting point

Overview

“Built environment” means the human-made space in which people live, work, learn and play and includes buildings, rights-of-way, and outdoor spaces. Standards in this area will address how to make buildings, streets, sidewalks and shared spaces accessible to all.

Achievements

- The Accessibility Advisory Committee has conducted an accessibility inventory on all municipal buildings.
- Construction of the Community Hub, including a new library. The facility is built to current code and is largely accessible (see notes in Barriers). The issues are real, but not significant and can be addressed in the near term. The Hub is a facility which is welcoming to all.
- Construction of the Public Washroom. This new facility is also largely compliant. A few issues are noted below in the Barriers section, but this asset demonstrates progress toward meeting accessibility goals.
- While Town Hall does have significant issues to address, some accessibility accommodations do exist. There is a ramp, and an accessible washroom. Further, plans to create an accessible

Council Chambers and Police Station are in the advanced stages and have funding.

- The trailhead for the French Basin will now include an accessible toilet (portable).
- Renovations at Town Hall are underway which will improve accessibility on the ground floor. These include an automatic door opener, a dual-height service counter, and improved access to the accessible washroom.
- Sidewalks in Town have recently been smoothed to ease mobility. Further, a more extensive replacement program for problem areas is funded and scheduled for FY 22/23.

Barriers

- Buildings (see inventories for specific details)
 - Community Hub
 - The Hub is a relatively new asset to town life. It houses a café, the public library, a “maker space”, a music room, and the Food Bank. Given its age, there are few accessibility issues, though improvements can be made to include:
 - Interior wayfinding
 - Braille and Large-Print signage
 - An emergency signal in the accessible washroom
 - Improvements to “flow” in the library

- Town Hall

The Town Hall is a 100-year-old building with multiple issues. The second floor is not accessible. As such, offices and services should be “re-arranged” to take fullest possible advantage of accessibility improvements on the ground floor. Remaining issues on the ground floor include:

- Interior wayfinding
 - Braille signage
- Increase in width of cased opening leading to the accessible washroom (in progress)
- Installation of an automatic opener on the front door (in progress)
- Lowering of evacuation maps and fire extinguishers.
- An emergency signal in the accessible washroom

- Public Washrooms

The Comfort Station is the newest municipal building. It was designed with accessibility in mind and meets the vast majority of standards. Improvements here deal mainly with the approach to the building and include:

- Improved accessible parking
- Curb cut and crosswalk re-located to be in line with the accessible parking
- An emergency signal in the individual washrooms

- Public spaces

- Market Square

Market Square is a large open area where weekly farmers' markets and other events are held. While it is essentially a flat concrete area, there are still required changes to be made, to include:

- The surface of Market Square should be more level
- Accessible parking improvements
- Improvements to the stairs leading to the market area from the parking lot.

○ French Basin Trail

The Trail is a 45-minute walk around a Ducks Unlimited wetland. While the trail-bed is compacted gravel, it is not up to current standards in all areas. Other improvements to the area will include:

- Accessible parking
- A consistently wide trail of compacted gravel (of the appropriate type)
- An accessible path to the off-leash dog park
- An accessible path to the picnic tables
- Temporary disruptions / Construction mitigation

Public Works makes every effort to create accessible pathways around sidewalk disruptions or construction. These include high-visibility signage, protective barriers and ramps.

Policies

For public spaces, the Town of Annapolis Royal will...

- By 2025, ensure that all or most municipal facilities meet the Accessibility requirements (Schedule "C") in the latest version of the Nova Scotia Building Code Regulation. For

facilities not completed by that date, have a plan in place to complete the work by 2030.

- Ensure that all new municipal buildings (including major renovations) meet the Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification (RHFAC) Gold Standard.
- Ensure sidewalks and curb cuts are improved and maintained, as soon as possible, to the standard outlined in Canadian Standards Association (CSA) B651-18, Accessible Design for the Built Environment.
- Provide accessible parking locations as required.

For community partnerships, the Town of Annapolis Royal will...

- Encourage private developers to have their existing buildings RHFAC-certified and for new developments to meet the RHFAC Gold Standard.
- Work with the business community, including the Annapolis Board of Trade, to promote Annapolis Royal as an accessible community.
- Encourage seniors to “age in place” through alternative housing options, such as “granny-flats”, co-housing, senior shared housing with students, etc.

Actions

Top priorities

- Improve sidewalks and curb cuts to the standard outlined in Canadian Standards Association (CSA) B651-18, Accessible Design for the Built Environment. (2022-2023)
- Complete Town Hall renovations to ensure the ground floor is accessible. (2021-2022)

- Put auditory, visual, and tactile markers at busy intersections where people cross the road. (2022-2023)
- Work with library partners, such as Annapolis Valley Regional Library, to ensure library collections are more accessible (2021-2022)
- Consider changing Land Use Bylaws to make it easier for homeowners and landowners to:
 - add a secondary suite (e.g., an apartment unit) or a backyard suite
 - create co-housing (a community that includes private living space and shared space). (2022-2023)



Information and Communications

Our starting point

Overview

Standards in this area will help to ensure all Nova Scotians can receive and share the same information. These may include accessible formats (for example, braille, American Sign Language, or large print), accessible websites and technologies, and standards for communicating with persons with disabilities.

Achievements

- Town Council and Committee of the Whole meetings are now available via Facebook live. This facilitates municipal participation for those with various accessibility challenges including mobility or hearing. Other advisory committees also have the option of meeting via Zoom which offers location flexibility and auditory support to include automatic subtitling.
- The newsletter, The Town Crier, is now available through multiple channels: email via MailChimp and through the website (as PDF) which facilitate access for those with vision challenges and large print hardcopy via free subscription or walk-in at Town Hall for those who may not be connected.
- The Town's website is of current design and is kept up to date. While improvements can be made, it scores moderately well on accessibility assessment software.
- The Town is in the process of installing an auditory loop which connects with hearing devices to support communication for those with impairment.

Barriers

- Web site

Using online assessment tools the Town website, generally scores well, but there are issues. These include:

- Issues with WCAG AAA Success Criterion 1.4.8 (paragraph spacing)
- Issues with WCAG AAA Success Criterion 3.2.5 (links in new windows without warning)
- Issues with WCAG A Success Criterion 2.4.4 (links without context)
- Issues with alternative text
- Issues with contrast

- Public meetings

The use of electronic channels has improved accessibility to public meetings. Remaining issues include:

- The need to complete accessibility renovations on the ground floor of Town Hall
- The Municipal Government requires the use of printed notices in newspaper for certain public meetings. This format is not accessible to all.

- Wayfinding

Existing wayfinding in the Town was not developed with accessibility concerns in mind. Systematic revisions will be required to include:

- High-contrast, visible signage
- Braille signage as appropriate
- Auditory crosswalks

Policies

The Town of Annapolis Royal will:

- On request, provide information in an accessible format, or with communication supports that consider a person's specific needs. (2022-onward)
- Ensure the Town's digital website is designed to be accessible for those with visual challenges. (2022- onward)
- Hold all in-person public meetings in barrier-free locations (2022-onward)

Actions

Top priorities

- By 2022, ensure the Town's web presence meets the latest Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG).
- Develop and implement a public awareness program (for Town staff and the public) to build awareness around barriers to accessibility and what an accessible community means. (2022-2023)
- Improve wayfinding within the Town to be high-visibility and include braille as appropriate. (2023-2024)



Employment

Our starting point

Overview

Standards in this area will support persons with disabilities in finding meaningful employment. The goal is to ensure equal access to employment for persons with disabilities.

Achievements

- The Town's HR policy is being updated to include language which explicitly supports a culture of inclusion.
- Members of Council receive iPads to access all documents. The flexibility of the display supports those who may need larger fonts or increased contrast.

Barriers

- Job opportunities
 - The second floor of Town Hall is not accessible.
 - Accommodations or the possibility of accommodations are not included with job descriptions.
- Hiring
 - Job postings do not include the possibility of accommodations.
 - Some job postings are age restricted.
 - Staff are generally not trained to recognize barriers that may limit opportunities.
- Culture of inclusion
 - Town Hall has not specifically sought to create a culture of inclusion or provided training to that end.

Policies

The Town of Annapolis Royal will...

- Offer accommodation during recruitment, if needed.
- Offer accommodation to employees of all ages and abilities. This includes providing assistive devices so that employees can succeed at their jobs.
- Work with Town staff to build an understanding of the value of accessibility and inclusion.

Actions

Top priorities

- Update the employee training manual to include a section on respecting diversity. This will include training in working with people of all ages and abilities. All Town employees will be required to take the Working with Abilities online training provided free by the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission (workwithabilitiesns.ca) (2022-)
- Share opportunities for accessibility training with residents and local businesses—online or in person with Town of Annapolis Royal staff training. (2022- onward)
- Investigate strategies to reach a wider and more diverse audience with job postings. Include statements in the job postings to ensure applicants are aware that accommodation can be provided.(2022-)

Goods and Services

Our starting point

Overview

Standards for delivering and receiving goods and services may address how service providers interact with and are trained to serve person with disabilities. This may include how persons with disabilities access goods and services, including the use of assistive devices.

Achievements

- The service counter at Town Hall will soon be dual-height making it wheelchair accessible and will have an auditory loop to support those with hearing aids.
- The Visitor Information Centre is now co-located at the Comfort Station. The building is accessible and on one level.
- Town Council and Committee of the Whole meetings are broadcast via Facebook Live. Other advisory committees also have the option of meeting via Zoom which offers location flexibility and auditory support to include automatic subtitling.
- The Active Living program oversees the maintenance of sporting facilities, play areas, and the trail system. The gym is accessible with a ramp and automatic door.

Barriers

- Services and Service Delivery
 - Town Staff are not trained in alternative communication methods such as American Sign Language (ASL).

- The Town website needs to address accessibility issues (see Information and Communications)
- There are no resources for in-person alternative communication at meetings such as ASL interpreters.
- Physical space
 - The second floor of Town Hall is not accessible (see Built Environment)
 - The playground on lower St. George Street is not accessible
- Programs
 - While the gym is accessible, it has no equipment or programs for those with accessibility needs.
- Events
 - Events are planned without significant use of the accessibility lens.

Policies

- The Town of Annapolis Royal will deliver all goods and services without bias. No resident shall be denied a service because of a disability.

Actions

Top priorities

- Provide an adapted listing of recreation programs and services for people of all ages and abilities, and update it annually.
- Where applicable, include an “Accessibility Lens”/Impact Analysis in reports to council and in consultant reports delivered to staff and Council.

Transportation

Our starting point

Overview

Standards in this area will help make it easier for everyone to travel in both rural and urban Nova Scotia. These standards will not apply to forms of transportation regulated by the federal government, such as travel by air and rail.

Achievements

- The Town works with King's Transit, whose buses are equipped with Global Positioning and Active Location technology for use with the DoubleMap app. This enables passengers to have accurate arrival times. The buses also have automatic voice announcements and low-floor kneeling capabilities and electric ramps.
- The Town removes snow at transit stops and in parking lots
- The Town has a private taxi service for point-to-point travel

Barriers

- While the Town does have a private taxi service for point-to-point travel, it has no capacity to support accessibility options for its users.

Actions

Top priorities

- Town staff to work with Kings Transit staff to review snow removal at transit stops and steps (including costs) required to improve snow removal timelines
- Ensure all transit stops are designed to meet or exceed Canadian Standards Association (CSAA) Standard B651-18, Accessible Design for the Built Environment.



Implementation

AAC

- Review this Accessibility Plan at least every three years as required by the Accessibility Act and update as required.

Accessibility Coordinator

- Guide the work by the Accessibility Advisory Committee.
- Book meetings, prepare and distribute agendas and minutes, assist Chair in leading the meetings, manage recruitment for Committee when necessary.
- Act as a liaison with the Accessibility Advisory Committee and Council.

Council

- Recognize the significant cost of implementing this plan and the municipal operational plans and seek adequate funding to allow the Town to meet the requirements under Nova Scotia's Accessibility Act.

CAO/staff

- The Chief Administrative Officer is responsible for implementing the plan and assigning an Accessibility Coordinator.
- Ensure the commitments outlined in the Accessibility Plan are reflected and operationalized in the municipal Accessibility Action Plan required as public sector bodies under Nova Scotia's Accessibility Act.
- Accept complaints, questions, and concerns submitted to them by the public.

- Provide a summary of complaints, questions, and concerns to the Accessibility Advisory Committee.

Timeline

In 2017, the Government of Nova Scotia passed the province's Accessibility Act. A supporting document, Access by Design 2030, is the implementation strategy for how Nova Scotia will achieve an accessible province by 2030. It also identifies actions to improve public awareness, build collaboration and increase compliance with existing regulations. The Accessibility Act set an ambitious goal to become a fully accessible province by 2030. As such, we strive to have the commitments of this plan achieved by 2030, to be compliant with the Province of Nova Scotia requirements.

For specific timelines and budgets associated with the commitments and action items of this plan, please see the Accessibility Action Plan.



Monitoring and Evaluation

The Accessibility Advisory Committee will submit an Accessibility Report Card to the Council by March 31st of each year. This report card will track and report on the progress made towards the commitments in this plan, and performance of the policies and actions in the Accessibility Action Plans. The Accessibility Advisory Committee may also make recommendations to improve this plan. The Accessibility Report Cards will be posted on the Town website.

The Accessibility Advisory Committee will review new directives, guidelines, and updates from the province as they are released, and determine if updates to this Accessibility Plan are required based on those updates. The Accessibility Advisory Committee will make recommendations to the Council on the need for updates to the Accessibility Action Plan.



Responding to Questions and Complaints

- Anyone can lodge a complaint, pose a question, or express a concern about accessibility in Annapolis Royal. These should be directed to the CAO.
- The CAO will respond within a reasonable time. Before responding, the CAO will consult with the staff person responsible for the area of inquiry. The CAO's response will contain the reasons for the decision.
- If the complainant still has concerns, they can contact the Accessibility Advisory Committee Chair.
- Anyone can appeal to Council if they are not satisfied with the response from the CAO or the Accessibility Advisory Committee. Council may refer any appeal to the Accessibility Advisory Committee for additional review and recommendations before issuing a final response to the complainant.
- The CAOs will keep a record of all complaints, questions, and concerns submitted to them, and will provide summary updates to the Accessibility Advisory Committee on a regular basis. These updates will become part of the Accessibility Advisory Committee's continual review of the Accessibility Plan and may inform future changes.

Reference Documents

The Built Environment Standard, under the Government of Nova Scotia Accessibility Plan 2018- 2021 will be released soon and include accessibility standards for the built environment, to prevent the design and construction of new barriers and remove existing barriers over time.

The Clearing Our Path resource, produced by the CNIB Foundation (2019), provides international standards and universal design principles to build accessible environments for people who are blind or have low vision.

Link: http://www.clearingourpath.ca/8.0.0-design-needs_e.php

The Government of Nova Scotia Accessibility Plan 2018-2021, released by the Department of Justice in September 2018, is a multi-year plan setting specific priorities and commitments for achieving accessibility within the Government of Nova Scotia.

Link: <https://novascotia.ca/accessibility/plan/government-accessibility-plan.pdf>

The Interim Accessibility Guidelines for Indoor and Outdoor Spaces, released by the Nova Scotia Accessibility Directorate in April 2020, provide ways to identify barriers to accessibility in the built environment and are intended to be replaced by the provincial accessibility standard for the built environment.

Link: <https://novascotia.ca/accessibility/docs/Interim-Accessibility-Guidelines-for-Indoor-and- Outdoor-Spaces.pdf>

The Wolfville: Access by Design, An Accessibility Plan for 2019-2022, released by the Town of Wolfville in April 2019, is the first municipal-level accessibility plan. The Town was chosen by the Government of Nova Scotia to serve as an example for other communities in the province.

Link: <https://www.amans.ca/other-resouces/692-wolfville-accessibility-plan/file.html>



Accessibility Advisory Committee Members

Brenda MacDonald	First Appointed: December 15, 2021 Current Term Expiring December 31, 2022
Brenda Escribano	First Appointed: December 15, 2021 Current Term Expiring December 31, 2022
Brant Hamilton Brown	First Appointed: December 15, 2021 Current Term Expiring December 31, 2022
Sharon Elliot	First Appointed: December 15, 2021 Current Term Expiring December 31, 2022
Mayor Amery Boyer Council Representative	Current Term Expiring December 31, 2022
Community Development Coordinator Ken Knox	NA

Council Members

Mayor Amery Boyer

Deputy Mayor Pat Power

Councillor Holly Sanford

Councillor Michael Tompkins

Councillor Paula Hafting