

Report to Council



Date: May 12, 2025

To: Council

From: City Manager

Subject: Accessibility Advisory Committee Update and Final Accessibility Plan

Department: Active Living & Culture

Recommendation:

THAT Council receives, for information, the report from Active Living & Culture, dated May 12, 2025, providing an annual update to Council from the Accessibility Advisory Committee;

AND THAT Council endorses the Accessibility Plan and implementation plan as outlined in the report dated May 12, 2025.

Purpose:

To receive an update from the Accessibility Advisory Committee and to endorse the final Accessibility Plan.

Background:

The Accessible BC Act came into effect in 2021. It provides a framework to identify, remove and prevent barriers to accessibility and sets out three key requirements of public sector organizations:

1. Establish an accessibility committee
2. Implement a tool to receive public feedback on accessibility
3. Develop an accessibility plan

Over the past 18 months, the City has advanced all three of these requirements as outlined in the Discussion section of this report.

Discussion:

Accessibility Committee:

In June of 2023, Council endorsed the [Terms of Reference](#) for the City's Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC). The purpose of the committee is to assist the City with identifying barriers and to advise the City on how to remove and prevent barriers to people in Kelowna or people interacting with the City, as they relate to matters within the City's jurisdiction. It is an advisory committee of Council that makes

recommendations on how the City can identify, remove and prevent barriers to the full and equal participation of people with disabilities.

Nine members and two alternates from the community make up the committee. All members have lived experience with disability, support someone with a disability, and/or work in the field of accessibility. The committee meets monthly with the support of two staff liaisons and the Office of the City Clerk.

Over the past year and half, the Committee has received information and provided feedback to several different divisions and projects including Communications, Transportation, and YLW.

Public Feedback Mechanism:

With input from the Committee, several options were considered to facilitate the public in providing feedback on accessibility to the City. Recognizing that the [City's Service Request System](#) is already well known and used in the community, a new portal was created specifically for accessibility related issues.

To date, over ninety issues have been reported and triaged through this portal since it was launched in May 2024. Top issues have included, sidewalk accessibility, sidewalk snow removal, designated parking abuse and proper access to public and private buildings. The SR System allows staff to monitor and track accessibility issues and to be aware of trends or problem areas. The committee is updated each month with the issues that are submitted and help to identify solutions to the barriers presented.

In addition, a new landing page for Accessibility has been created on kelowna.ca/accessibility. This hub contains information on the committee, the Accessibility Plan and helps members of the public find additional information.

Accessibility Plan:

A 5-year Accessibility Plan which outlines strategic goals and actions to enhance accessibility across the city has been developed. In 2024, the City hired Happy Cities (HC) consulting to lead the development of the City's Accessibility Plan. HC has done a review of existing policies and plans, conducted extensive community engagement, and reviewed priorities and action items with City staff and the AAC. The draft plan was presented to Council in March 2025 and the public were asked to provide feedback on the plan shortly after.

The second round of engagement highlighted that Transportation and the Built Environment are key areas to focus on as they showed up as both the highest priority and the areas that would have the most impact. When asked about any gaps in the plan, the feedback discussed improvements in employment opportunities, housing, transportation, and consistent accessibility standards in civic buildings. Feedback from this round has been incorporated into the final plan.

The Plan focuses on five core areas under the City's jurisdiction:

- Built environment
 - Parks & open spaces, city facilities
- Transportation
 - Sidewalks, roads, parking, bike lanes and public transit
- Programs and services

- Recreation, cultural, social
- Information and communication
 - Printed, digital, in-person
- Employment
 - Hiring processes, accessibility supports for employees

It should be noted that the Transportation Accessibility Strategy is being developed simultaneously. The first round of engagement and the draft recommendations of the Accessibility Plan have been co-created by the Transportation team. An additional round of engagement and refined recommendations will be conducted through this strategy and so the transportation recommendations within the Accessibility Plan remain high-level at this time.

A working group of staff from key departments has been established to action and report on the implementation plan. Budget processes are being considered, and potential grant opportunities are being identified. Some action items are already underway and approximately a dozen more could be initiated within the next 18 months. Updates will be provided to the AAC on a quarterly basis which will highlight the projects in progress and any significant advances or challenges.

Next steps:

The Committee will continue to meet regularly and will be kept informed on the progress of the implementation of the Accessibility Plan. Council will be provided with an update from the Committee which will include a progress report on the Accessibility Plan annually.

As per Provincial requirements, the Plan will be updated every three years.

Conclusion:

The first year of the City's AAC has been marked by significant progress and the establishment of essential tools and resources to improve accessibility. The Committee remains committed to advocating for and implementing measures that will make our city more inclusive and accessible for all residents. The Accessibility Plan reflects the unique needs of Kelowna and has been thoughtfully created by the voices of people with lived experience of disability and balanced with the operational demands of the municipality. Staff and the committee will continue this important work in the coming years and welcome ongoing feedback and participation from the community.

Internal Circulation:

Active Living & Culture
City Clerk

Considerations applicable to this report:

Legal/Statutory Authority: [Accessible British Columbia Act](#)

Consultation and Engagement:

The second round of engagement consisted of a plain language survey that was hosted together with the draft plan for participants to provide feedback on. The survey was emailed out to accessibility related organizations and promoted on the City's social channels and newsletters.

Considerations not applicable to this report:

Legal/Statutory Procedural Requirements:

Existing Policy:

Financial/Budgetary Considerations:

Communications comments:

Submitted by: M. Siggers, Community & Neighbourhood Services Manager

Approved for inclusion: J. Gabriel, Divisional Director, Active Living & Culture

Attachments:

Attachment A: Kelowna Accessibility Plan