Town of Shelburne
Accessibility Action Plan

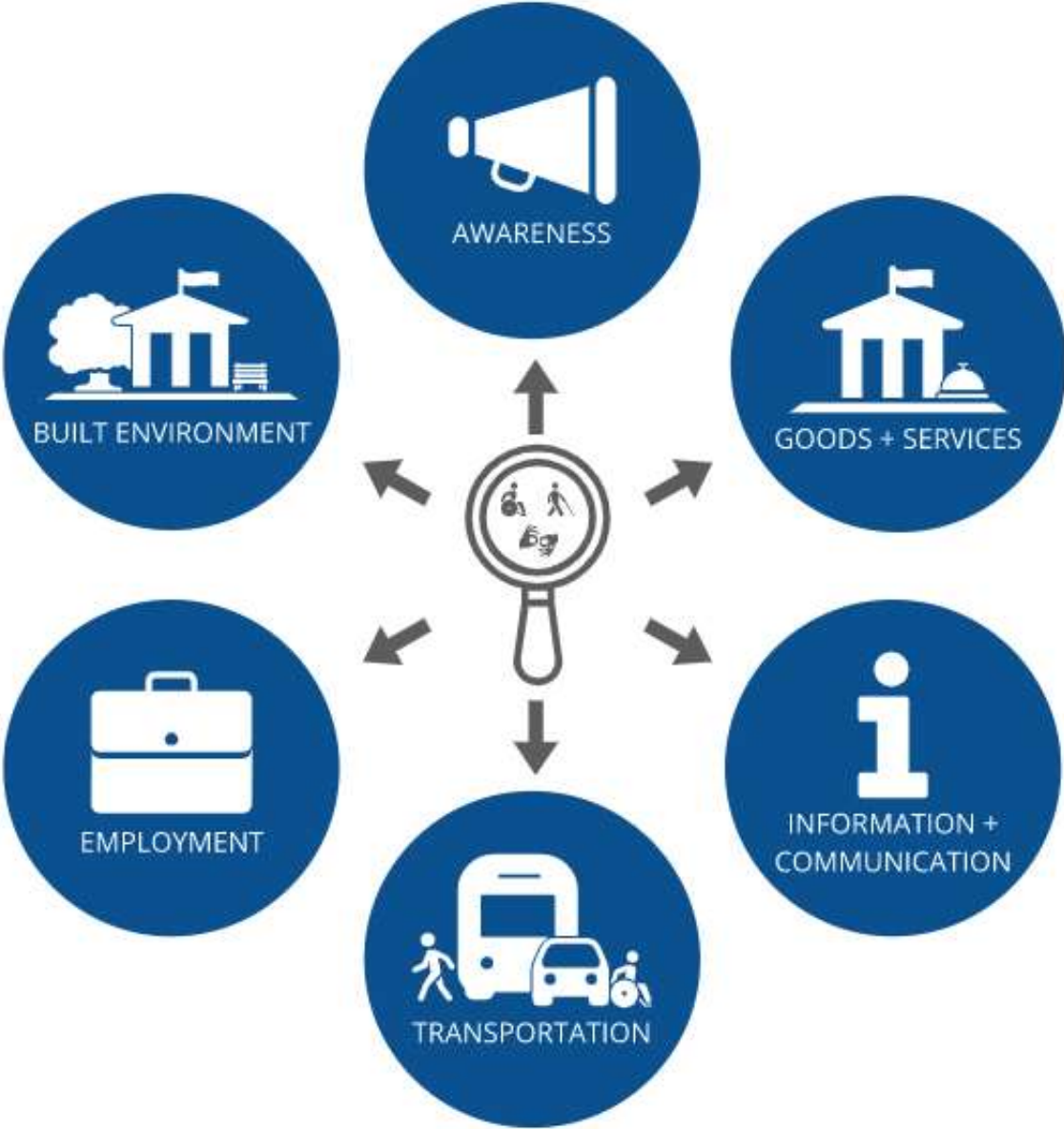|			
Eastern Shelburne Accessibility Plan – Town of Shelburne Action Plan	Emanuel Nicolescu	2022-04-07	Emma MacEachern
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AREAS OF FOCUS

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Access: A place that is easily reached, an environment that is easily navigated, or a program or service that can easily be obtained.

Accessibility Act (2017): The law enacted by the Province of Nova Scotia to achieve accessibility by preventing barriers to accessibility, developing and implementing provincial accessibility standards, and defining the role of an accessibility directorate in supporting and advancing accessibility initiatives and broader disability-related issues.
(https://nslegislature.ca/sites/default/files/legc/statutes/accessibility.pdf)

Accessibility Lens: A tool for assessing programs and services to ensure that persons with disabilities have equal access to and equitable inclusion in programs and services.

Accommodation: The personalized adaption of a workplace to overcome the barriers faced by persons with disabilities.

Active Transportation: Using your own power to get from one place to another. This includes walking, biking, skateboarding, in-line skating/rollerblading, jogging and running, and non-mechanized wheel chairing.

ASL: American Sign Language

Barrier: 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."

CART: Communication Access Realtime Translation

Disability: Nova Scotia's Accessibility Act defines a barrier as "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."

Equity/Equitable: A commitment to fairness. Equitable access is different from equal access. Equality means each individual or group is provided with the same resources or opportunities. Equity recognizes that each person has different circumstances and allocates the exact resources and opportunities needed to reach an equal outcome.

Plain Language: Language that is clear and easy for the reader or listener to understand.

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

RHFAC: Rick Hanson 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.)

AWARENESS

Our Commitment

We will create a culture of accessibility across our three municipal units. This includes increasing public awareness about the rights of persons with a disability, barriers we have to accessibility, and celebrating the contributions of our community members with disabilities.

Policies

The Municipality of the District of Shelburne, Town of Shelburne, and Town of Lockeport will:

- Promote social inclusion in municipally led programming and events.
- Increase disability representation in promotional materials.

Actions

- Develop and initiate a public awareness campaign designed to educate about the rights of persons with disabilities, promote positive perceptions and greater social awareness towards persons with disabilities, and promote recognition of the skills, merits, and abilities of persons with disabilities and of their contributions to the community.
- Promote National Accessibility Week and any associated accessibility and/or inclusion activities or events.
- Strive to provide accessibility awareness training for Council and staff.
- Create a dedicated accessibility newsletter that is made available both online and in print.
- Hold regular public meetings and educational events to increase accessibility.
- Provide ongoing accessibility content on the Town's website and social media pages to keep people engaged and accessibility on people's minds.
- Publish accessibility-related news, such as recently completed accessibility improvements and upcoming events.

GOODS & SERVICES

Our Commitment

We will ensure that people of all abilities have equitable access to goods and services provided by the Municipality of the District of Shelburne, the Town of Shelburne, and the Town of Lockeport. This includes ensuring that there are policies, procedures, and tools to promote the accessible delivery of services.

Policies

The Municipality of the District of Shelburne, Town of Shelburne, and Town of Lockeport will:
- Ensure no individual is denied services because of a disability.
- Commit to deliver all goods and services without bias, making them accessible to all.

The Starting Point-Town of Shelburne

Overview

The following are some of the services delivered to the public by the Town either independently or and/or jointly with the Municipality of the District of Shelburne or the Town of Lockeport with accessibility in mind:

- Handling meetings of Council and Advisory Committees
- Maintaining parks, trails, and open spaces.
- Maintaining streets and sidewalks.
- Providing recreational programming and equipment loans.
- Providing emergency services such as fire and EMO.
- Providing grants and support to local community groups.
- Maintaining water, sewer, and waste services.

Achievements

- The Town Building Inspector is enrolled in the Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification training.

- The Town provides online credit card payment options for municipal taxes and water as well as certain municipal services in addition to in-person, online, and telephone banking payments options.
- The Town extends grants to organizations working to support people with disabilities.

Barriers

- Many of the facilities that house programs and services are not accessible for people of all abilities.
- It is hard to find out what kind of services and programs are available for people with disabilities.
- There are limited inclusive play areas in the Town.

Actions

- Strive to develop accessible customer service policies which support the principles of independence, dignity, integration, and equal opportunity.
- Provide accessibility customer service training to:
    - All Town employees (this includes full-time, part-time, and contract positions) whose duties require interacting with members of the public.
    - Any staff involved in the development of Town policies (this includes managers, senior leaders, and elected officials).
- Create an "Accessibility" page on the Town website that provides consolidated information about accessibility services, programs, and resources available through the municipality and provincial and federal governments. Include an embedded form that allows anyone to provide feedback or submit accessibility-related services requests and questions.
- Promote adaptive recreation equipment available for public use.
- Ensure the public service counter at the Town Office is at a wheelchair-appropriate height.
- Incorporate accessibility design, criteria, and features in procurement and buying practices, where feasible.

- Develop a procedure for alerting the public when facilities or services that people with disabilities usually use are temporarily unavailable (ex. elevator or accessible washroom is out of service). Notices of service disruptions should include the reason for the disruption, expected duration, and any alternative measures in place.

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION

Our Commitment

We will ensure that all people of all abilities can receive, understand and share information and communication provided by the Municipality of the District of Shelburne, Town of Shelburne, and Town of Lockeport.

Policies

The Municipality of the District of Shelburne, Town of Shelburne, and Town of Lockeport will:

- On request, provide information in an accessible format or with communication support that considers a person's individual need, at no additional charge.
- Ensure that all public meetings are as accessible as possible to all members of the public by offering material in various formats and offering support to facilitate equitable participation.
- Train front-line staff in effective methods for communicating with people of all abilities.
- Provide information in an accessible format when requested.

The Starting Point-Town of Shelburne

Overview

The Town delivers information to the public in many ways, including:

- Digitally via email, Town website, Vimeo, as well as social media outlets.
- In-person at the various facilities which host meetings of Town Council, Committees, and other services.
- In print via newspapers, newsletters, and direct mail.
- Community bulletin boards.

Achievements

- Council meeting agendas and minutes are posted on the Town website.
- The Town has installed large outdoor digital screens listing Town news, services, and initiatives, and providing associated contact information.
- Shelburne Town Council meetings air online through the town Vimeo Channel and on Eastlink once per month.

Barriers

- Not everyone has access to a computer or the internet or does not desire to learn about technology. Other means of communication need to be available.
- The Town website is difficult to navigate and is not accessible to people with visual impairments.
- The Town Council Chambers are upstairs, making it difficult to attend meetings.
- It is difficult for people with hearing impairments to call the Town for information they cannot find on the Town website.
- It is hard to find out what kind of services are available for people with disabilities.
- There are no policies around how information and communication materials must be provided to the community.
- When masks are worn at public meetings and service counters, they create a challenge for people with hearing impairments who rely on lip-reading.
- Videos of Council meetings posted to the Town Vimeo site do not provide closed caption.

Actions

- Provide key municipal communications in accessible formats promptly and at no cost to users.
- Train relevant staff in accessibility and inclusive communication strategies.
- Video content posted to the Town website or social media pages will include closed captions where possible and described video where appropriate.
- Strive to ensure that any digital communications are screen-readable.

- Aim to establish and implement a plan to ensure that the Town website complies with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0, by 2025.
- Develop guidelines for information and communications materials to ensure they are accessible to individuals with disabilities.
- Continue to ask & reflect on resident feedback on how to improve the accessibility of information and communication, on a regular basis.
- Consider budgeting for the cost of providing communication supports, including ASL interpretation and Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART), at council and other public meetings upon request.

TRANSPORTATION

Our Commitment

We will support local organizations and businesses in the Municipality of the District of Shelburne, Town of Shelburne and the Town of Lockeport that provide transportation to ensure equitable access for people of all abilities.

Policies

The Municipality of the District of Shelburne, Town of Shelburne, and Town of Lockeport will:

- Continue to support the Sou'West Nova Transit Association as it provides a valuable service to residents throughout Eastern Shelburne County.
- Strive to support safe infrastructure for active transportation (e.g. walking, rolling, cycling).

The Starting Point-Town of Shelburne

Overview

There are no public transportation services provided by the Town of Shelburne. The Town provides grants to support Sou'West Nova Transit Association. The Sou'West Nova Transit Association has been providing rides throughout Shelburne County since 2012, and currently operates a fleet of vehicles which includes wheelchair accessible transportation in addition to volunteer drivers who use their own vehicle.

Achievements

- The Town provides funding to support transportation services by Sou'West Nova Transit.
- The Town received funding in 2016-17 to complete some of the Town's active transportation network.

Barriers

- There are no public transportation services operated by the Town.

- There is no known taxi service in the Town.
- Accessible parking is limited and often the location does not comply with accessibility standards (see Built Environment).
- Many sidewalks are in poor condition and difficult for physically disabled citizens.

Actions

- Continue to work with the Sou'West Nova Transit Association to contribute funding needed to expand the current service offerings to afford residents who rely on the service, increased flexibility and freedom.
- Ensure that all public parking areas have an adequate number of accessible parking spaces which meet the standards set out in the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) B651-18, Accessible Design for the Built Environment.
- Focus on increasing barrier-free access to sidewalks, crosswalks, and accessible parking spaces.
- Investigate other opportunities for community partners to further expand access to transportation and increase connectivity within the Town and surrounding communities.

EMPLOYMENT

Our Commitment

We will remove barriers to employment for persons with disabilities who seek employment with the Municipality of the District of Shelburne, Town of Shelburne, and Town of Lockeport. We will make our employment practices and workplaces accessible for both new and existing employees of all abilities.

Policies

The Municipality of the District of Shelburne, Town of Shelburne, and Town of Lockeport will:

- Offer accommodation during recruitment, if needed.
- Offer accommodation to employees of all abilities. This includes providing assistive devices so that employees can succeed at their jobs.
- Provide educational opportunities for employees to build an understanding of the value of accessibility and inclusion.
- Ensure that an accessibility lens is applied when reviewing or developing programs or processes relating to employment.

The Starting Point-Town of Shelburne

Overview

The Town of Shelburne employs permanent, part-time and seasonal employees. The primary worksite for most employees is the Town Office on Water Street. Other worksites include the Public Works Building, Water Treatment Plant, and the Wastewater Treatment Plant. The Shelburne Town Council consists of five elected officials.

Achievements

- The contracted Town Building Inspector is enrolled in RHFAC training.
- Job posting for the Town includes a statement outlining the Town's commitment to hiring members of the community who may have accessibility needs.

Barriers

- Job openings are advertised using traditional print and online recruitment methods, which may not be accessible to some individuals.
- The second floor is not wheelchair accessible in the Town of Shelburne administration building.
- Training and recognizing barriers that may limit job opportunities for qualified individuals has not been prioritized yet.
- Historically, Town processes, systems, communications, and documents have not taken accessibility into account and may not be easily adaptable to assistive technologies.

Actions

- Provide accessibility and inclusion training for all Town staff and elected officials. This includes a mandatory requirement to complete the Working with Abilities online training, provided free of charge by the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission.
- Conduct a formal review of all municipal workplaces concerning physical barriers to allow employment for persons with disabilities, and implement a plan to ensure that all requiring municipal workplaces are barrier-free where appropriate.
- Develop a formal Accommodation Policy.
- Ensure that announcements of job opportunities promote the availability of accommodations upon request, are made available in various formats, and are distributed through a broad range of intermediaries.
- Investigate different types of assistive technologies for the workplace and ensure funding is established for assistive devices for employees that may need some to succeed at their job.
- Set out long-term goals for increasing the representation of people with disabilities in the municipal workforce and establish a strategy and timeline for achieving those goals.
- Actively recruit people with disabilities to serve on Town committees and working groups.

BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Our Commitment

We will ensure that all new infrastructure (public buildings, streets, sidewalks, and public spaces) within the Municipality of the District of Shelburne, the Town of Shelburne, and the Town of Lockeport will be accessible to people of all abilities.

Policies

The Municipality of the District of Shelburne, the Town of Shelburne, and the Town of Lockeport will:

- Establish a plan to assess all municipal infrastructure based on the accessibility requirements (Schedule "C") in the most recent version of the Nova Scotia Building Code.
- Strive to achieve RHFAC Gold Standard for all new public buildings and facilities. Ensure that new public buildings and facilities meet or exceed the standard set out in the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) B651-18, Accessible Design for the Built Environment.
- Strive to have existing sidewalks, curb cuts, and crosswalks upgraded and ensure that newly constructed meet the standard set out in the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) B651-18, Accessible Design for the Built Environment.
- Aim to ensure that accessible detours are available when a sidewalk or shoulder is closed for or affected by construction.
- Provide basic access for people of all abilities to public buildings, public washrooms, and outdoor public spaces such as parks and beaches.
- Promote grant programs for accessibility upgrades to local businesses and organizations.

The Starting Point-Town of Shelburne

Overview

The Town of Shelburne owns several public facilities such as Town Hall, King Street Centre, Guild Hall, Shelburne Community Centre, Graham's Park, and the

Shelburne Community Centre. Other municipal facilities and infrastructure include many roads and sidewalks, several parks, green spaces, and athletic fields as well as buildings and properties which relate to municipal services such as sewage, water, and maintenance of other Town assets and properties.

Achievements

- The Town of Shelburne makes extensive use of its facilities at the Community Centre to ensure accessibility for many meetings and events, including a chair lift for the stage.
- King Street Centre is undergoing a retrofit which will improve accessibility.
- The new play area at Graham's Park in the Town of Shelburne was built with some accessible features including the splash pad and public washrooms.

Barriers

Indoor Public Spaces

- Older public buildings are not as accessible as the newer ones, and it is expensive to update (retrofit) existing buildings to make them more accessible.
- Many of the public washrooms and doorways in municipal buildings are not accessible to people using wheelchairs.
- Accessible parking is limited.
- Public buildings only have audible fire alarms.
- Council Chambers are not accessible – they are located on the second floor and have multiple barriers.
- Some power entry doors do not stay open long enough.

Parks and Open Spaces

- Some parks are not accessible for people using mobility devices.

Infrastructure

- Curb cuts on the sidewalk along the west side of Dock Street in the Town of Shelburne are too steep, making it difficult or impossible for some wheelchairs to mount onto the sidewalk.

- There is no sidewalk connecting the core of the Town of Shelburne to the hospital.
- Most crosswalks do not have curb cuts.
- Many sidewalks and crosswalks are in poor condition and are not safe for people with visual impairments and mobility challenges.
- Many streets in Town do not have sidewalks.

Actions

- Undertake accessibility audits of Town buildings and facilities that are accessed by the public. Identify and develop cost estimates for priority projects to be included in long-term budget planning.
- Ensure that locations holding public meetings or providing a public service are accessible for people of all and abilities – specifically Town Hall and Community Centre.
- Prioritize maintenance of sidewalks and ensure that curb cuts are provided at all new installations.
- Widen doorway and install/replace power door buttons at the entrance of Town buildings that are accessed by the public to meet RHFAC standards. Ensure that power doors open in the appropriate direction and remain open for an adequate amount of time.
- Strive to have adequate curb cuts at cross walks and work towards installing auditory, visual, and tactile markers at busy intersections.
- Work with organizations that lease municipally-owned buildings to undertake accessibility audits.
- Consider updating the Land Use By-Law or explore other options to mandate requirements for accessible parking.