



## INFORMATION ONLY COUNCIL REPORT

To: Mayor and Council

Date: October 8, 2024

From: Ron Bowles, Chief Administrative Officer

Subject: **Accessibility and Inclusion Plan**

Report Prepared by: Melissa Hunt-Anderson, Community and Social Development Coordinator

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### **STRATEGIC AREA(S) OF FOCUS**

**Invest in Infrastructure** – We will invest in building, improving and maintaining infrastructure to meet the needs of, and to provide a high quality of life for, current and future generations.

**Pursue Economic Growth and Prosperity** – We will work with stakeholders throughout the region to advocate for and support efforts aimed at helping West Kelowna businesses prosper. With a focus on the future, we will advance opportunities to expand our economy, increase employment, and develop the community in ways that contribute towards prosperity for all.

**Strengthen Our Community** – We will provide opportunities for the residents of West Kelowna to build connections, celebrate successes, embrace the community's strengths and diversity, address shared needs, and contribute to shaping the community's future.

**Foster Safety and Well-Being** – We will pursue through direct action, advocacy, and collaboration with local and regional service providers, investments in community health, needs-based housing, emergency preparedness, policing, and other services that foster safety and well-being in West Kelowna.

### **BACKGROUND**

The City of West Kelowna's Accessibility and Inclusion Committee (AIC) was formed in summer of 2023 to bring community members and organizations together to work collaboratively with municipal staff to discuss, develop, improve, promote, and sustain community accessibility and inclusion. This includes reducing and removing barriers associated with accessibility, focusing on experiences of people with different abilities, and fostering an all-encompassing community.

The Accessible British Columbia Act received royal assent on June 17, 2021, and on April 14, 2022, the government filed the Accessible British Columbia Regulation (B.C. Regulation) providing clarity to the types of organizations that will be subject to accessibility requirements under the B.C. Act, which included municipalities and local government bodies. The Accessible BC Act requires the City to:

1. Establish a committee (City's AIC),
2. Create an accessibility plan, and
3. Create a feedback tool to engage public feedback on the Plan and the barriers to individuals interacting with the City.

After forming, the first priority of the AIC was to create an Accessibility Plan designed to expand and improve accessibility options within our City. The Province created a fund to support organizations with the accessibility requirements outlined, and the City applied for the maximum amount of funding (\$10,000) from Disability Alliance BC to hire a disability and inclusion consultant to support the creation of the Accessibility & Inclusion Plan. The AIC Consultant, Spring Hawes, was hired in early 2024 to work closely with the AIC to create the City's first accessibility and inclusion plan and feedback mechanism.

## DISCUSSION

### Accessibility & Inclusion Plan Process

The City's Draft Accessibility & Inclusion Plan (the Plan) outlines a framework to identify, remove, and prevent barriers to accessibility. In collaboration with AIC and community input, the Plan's purpose is to help residents and visitors with varied abilities to use and enjoy our sidewalks, pathways, parks, trails, facilities, beaches and other attractions and amenities, as well as feel welcome and included in our City. The below graphic outlines the four Phases of development of the Accessibility & Inclusion Plan:



It was important for the AIC to ensure that the Plan was developed with substantial community and stakeholder consultation. Public input was open from April 9 – 30, 2024 and included a 16-question survey that was available in a variety of formats to provide

opportunities for anyone to share their input. The primary goal was to hear from West Kelowna residents and stakeholders to understand the current accessibility landscape and any barriers within our community. The community was invited to share their thoughts via an online survey at [OurWK.ca/accessibility](http://OurWK.ca/accessibility), ask questions and learn more about the AIC. The City also provided multiple alternative methods for sharing input: Paper copies of the feedback form were located at various City facilities, at the Okanagan Wildfire Responders Gratitude Event, and the option to call or email the AIC Staff Liaison to answer the survey in person or over the phone was also available. During the Accessibility & Inclusion Plan consultation, we received a total of 111 completed surveys which provided a summary of below feedback:

- 39% said they would rate the City of West Kelowna's accessibility as okay (43 people)
- 70% said that someone in their family/household has accessibility needs (78 people)
- 41% said either themselves or someone in their household has experienced accessibility barriers at a City facility (46 people)
- 50% said they have experienced physical environment barriers in the City (56 people)
- 32% said they have experienced accessibility barriers at a park, playground or trail (36 people)

The AIC members met on May 15 to review the survey results in details (both the qualitative and quantitative data), and following that meeting, the AIC were provided with a survey prioritize the actions identified in the community survey under the following headings:

- |                              |                            |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. <b>Infrastructure</b>     | 4. <b>Service Delivery</b> |
| 2. <b>Facilities</b>         | 5. <b>Policy</b>           |
| 3. <b>Parks &amp; Trails</b> | 6. <b>Attitudes</b>        |

These prioritized actions were then shared with City staff to review and provide input in relation to:

- Cost of Implementation,
- Ease of Implementation,
- Incorporation into a current/existing/upcoming City plan(s), and
- Your understanding of scope of the work involved, department budget, and staffing capacity related to completing the actions.
- Any other input you feel would be relevant to supporting the Accessibility & Inclusion Plan

Next, the AIC met on July 17 to review the input of the City staff and to categorize the actions into short, medium and long-term actions. With community, AIC, stakeholder and staff input, the AIC consultant developed a Draft Accessibility & Inclusion Plan. The

attached Draft outlines the input and feedback of the AIC in close consultation with the AIC Consultant and Staff Liaison.

The Key Actions section outlines opportunities for the City of West Kelowna to showcase their efforts aligned with the Accessibility Act (2021) implemented across British Columbia. The AIC understands that the City of West Kelowna is committed to working with people with disabilities, using an accessibility lens to create a sustainable and inclusive culture, keeping in mind staffing, time and financial capacity to address the recommendations outlined in the Key Actions. By ensuring accessibility is prioritized throughout communications, services, planning and programming and policies, the City of West Kelowna is expressing a commitment to equality, dignity and justice for everyone.

### Next Steps

The Accessibility & Inclusion Plan is an opportunity for people in West Kelowna to engage in community-building where inclusion becomes an on-going practice, involving people with disabilities in the many stages of designing actions from concept to implementation, and feedback. The next steps for the Draft Accessibility & Inclusion Plan are to gather feedback and recommendations from Council before the Draft is provided to the community for input and feedback (Phase 3). Following community engagement on the Draft Plan, the AIC Consultant, Spring Hawes, will compile and integrate the community's feedback into a final West Kelowna Accessibility & Inclusion Plan, which will be presented to Council for hopeful endorsement this fall (Phase 4).

### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications associated in creating the AIC – Accessibility & Inclusion Plan document. The City received a grant (\$10,000) from Disability Alliance BC for consulting and engagement fees associated with the Accessibility & Inclusion Plan.

### COUNCIL REPORT / RESOLUTION HISTORY

Date	Report Topic / Resolution	Resolution No.
June 13, 2023	<b>THAT</b> Council approves the Accessibility and Inclusion Committee's Terms of Reference as amended; <b>THAT</b> Council directs staff to seek the new Accessibility and Inclusion Committee's membership through means of public advertisements and recruitment; and <b>THAT</b> Council directs staff to bring the list of volunteers back to Council for appointment of the members	June 13, 2023

## **CONCLUSION**

It was important to the Accessibility & Inclusion Committee (AIC), that through the Accessibility & Inclusions Plan, accessibility becomes embedded into City practices, so that *accessibility becomes a way of doing things, rather than a checklist to be completed*. The Key Actions were developed to focus on operationalizing accessibility - by embedding inclusive practices into City operations, services, and infrastructure. The Plan aims to enhance accessibility across all city functions, with key actions that are practical and realistic, and that promote an inclusive environment through clear, operational steps.

While the AIC strongly believes that all the 45 Actions are important and urgent, it is noted that time, funding and capacity constraints do not allow for all of them to be immediately prioritized. The AIC also recognizes that 'laying the groundwork' is key to the success of creating a sustainable culture of accessibility and inclusion.

## **REVIEWED BY**

Brent Magnan, Director of Development Approvals

Trevor Seibel, Deputy CAO/Deputy Corporate Officer

## **APPROVED FOR THE AGENDA BY**

Ron Bowles, Chief Administrative Officer

Powerpoint: Yes  No

### Attachments:

1. DRAFT Accessibility and Inclusion Plan
2. What We Heard Report (inc. Feedback Summary Report and Detailed Survey Report)