

# MEANINGFUL ACCESS: TOWN OF NEW GLASGOW ACCESSIBILITY ACTION PLAN

2022-2025



New Glasgow  
*flourish*







# LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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We would like to acknowledge the Town of New Glasgow is in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People. This territory is covered by the "Treaties of Peace and Friendship" which Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqiyik Peoples first signed with the British Crown in 1725. The treaties did not deal with the surrender of lands and resources, but in fact, recognized Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqiyik titles and established the rules for what was to be an ongoing relationship between nations.

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# WELCOME MESSAGE

## The Accessibility Advisory Committee is excited to present to the public the Town of New Glasgow's first Accessibility Action Plan.

The plan is a result of many hours of work by a dedicated group of people who believe that barriers can be removed when we all listen, learn, cooperate and grow as a community. The Accessibility Advisory Committee is a Committee of Council, and this Municipal Plan serves as a guide on how to make the Town of New Glasgow accessible by 2030.

**Meaningful accessibility** is the theme of our plan and is embedded in all areas of the report to address the real needs of everyone regardless of their ability. In order to understand how meaningful access impacts the day-to-day lives of people with disabilities and their families, we must listen to those touched by disabilities. That is why over the next two years, the Committee will continue to seek input from the public to ensure "first voice" is always attained. This plan will continue to be strengthened as Council and staff use it as a roadmap to realize access.

As Chair of the AAC, I want to thank all those who contributed to this Plan and strongly believe we can achieve the vision stated below.

### New Glasgow's Vision to Achieve Access

The Town of New Glasgow envisions a community that is strengthened by diversity, inclusion, respect, equity, and justice for all people. To create, nurture and sustain an inclusive community, where differences drive innovative solutions, meaningful access is essential. Meaningful access for everyone, regardless of age and ability, is the cornerstone of our municipal accessibility plan. Removing all types of barriers will ensure people with disabilities and their families are valued equally and participate fully in all aspects of society.

Sincerely,

Margie Beck  
Chair of the New Glasgow AAC



Thank you to the dedicated members of our Accessibility Advisory Committee and the Town of New Glasgow staff members who spent many hours developing this plan.

For further inquiries, the Accessibility Advisory Committee email is [accessibility@newglasgow.ca](mailto:accessibility@newglasgow.ca)

Members of the Accessibility Advisory Committee are:

### **Appointed Elected Officials:**

Councillor Clyde Fraser

### **Appointed Members at Large:**

Margie Beck (Chair)  
Tracy Hermillon (Co-Chair)  
Courtney Malcolm  
Dorothy Doyle  
Brittany Currie

### **Ex Officio Members:**

Earl MacKenzie, P.Eng, RFHAC  
Thivjan Tharmaratnam  
Veronica Deno

Special mention to Ally MacKenzie for her work on formatting the plan.

# GLOSSARY

**AAC:** Accessibility Advisory Committee

**Access or Accessibility:** The Rick Hansen Foundation describes accessibility as the "degree to which a product, device, activity, facility, service or environment allows everyone to participate fully and is available to everyone on an equal basis.

**ASL:** American Sign Language is a natural language that serves as the predominant sign language of Deaf communities in the United States and most of Anglophone Canada. ASL is a complete and organized visual language that is expressed by facial expression as well as movements and motions with the hands.

**BAC:** The Business Advisory Committee (committee of Town Council).

**Barrier:** A barrier is anything that stops, impedes, prevents or causes difficulty for a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society. Barriers may be attitudinal, architectural and physical, organizational or systemic, informational or communications, or technology.

**Braille:** A form of written language for blind people, in which characters are represented by patterns of raised dots that are felt with the fingertips.

**CART:** Communication Access Real-Time (CART) - The professionally translated transcription of speech to text through a third party. It enables culturally Deaf, oral deaf, deafened and hard of hearing people to have visual access to the spoken word. CART services can be provided on-site or remotely.

**CSA:** Canadian Standards Association CSA B651 is the Standard on accessibility.

**Deaf:** "Deaf" (small 'd') usually refers to a hearing loss so severe that there is very little or no functional hearing. "Hard of hearing" refers to a hearing loss where there may be enough residual hearing that an auditory device, such as a hearing aid or FM system, provides adequate assistance to process speech.

**Deaf culture:** Deaf culture is the culture of Deaf (capital 'D') people based on a signed language and values, traditions and behaviour norms specific to the Deaf community. Deaf culture offers a strong sense of belonging and takes a socio-cultural point of view of deafness.

**Disability:** A physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, sensory, learning or communication impairment, or a functional limitation, whether permanent, temporary or episodic in nature, or evident or not, that hinders a person's full and equal participation in society when facing a barrier.

**Ergonomics:** The relationship between people and the products they use.

**First Voice:** Listening, understanding and learning from people with lived experiences.

**Pedestrian:** A person walking or using an assistive or mobility device to travel outdoors.

**Meaningful access:** Meaningful access is access that meets the real accessibility needs of all users of a site, regardless of their ability.

**Mobility Device:** Any assistive technology that aids the movement of people with physical disabilities. Examples include lift chairs, scooters, or wheelchairs.

**NSBCR:** Nova Scotia Building Code Regulations.

**Obstacle:** An obstacle is a partial impediment or limitation to an activity. Obstacles may not stop a person with a disability from full participation, but they do make participation unnecessarily difficult.

**Plain Language:** Language a reader or listener can understand easily and completely.

**RHF:** Rick Hansen Foundation

**RHFAC:** Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification (RHFAC) - A national rating system that measures and certifies the level of meaningful access of buildings and sites. It measures the level of meaningful access beyond building code and is based upon the holistic user experience of people with varying disabilities affecting their mobility, vision, and hearing.

**Tactile:** Related to the sense of touch.

**TWSI:** Tactile Walking (or Warning) Surface Indicators. These devices felt by a person's foot or assistive device and designed to facilitate and secure the movement of visually impaired persons in areas with obstacles. TWSIs are textured ground or floor surface features to assist people who are visually impaired to navigate the surrounding environment

**Universal Design:** There is only one definition as described by its founder, Ronald Mace. Universal Design is defined as "the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaption or specialized design" (Ronald Mace, 1988).

**Users:** Everyone and anyone who uses (or operates) a service, facility, site, space, environment, or technology.

**WCAG:** Web Content Accessibility Guidelines developed by the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines Working Group.

# INCLUSION & DIVERSITY

## Commitment to Inclusion and Diversity

New Glasgow strives to be a community where diversity is celebrated and valued, and inclusion is unexceptional. Currently, the Town has a Committee of Council purposely fostering inclusion in our community. The Committee makes recommendations to Council around the implementation of programs, policies, and practices to promote inclusion and equity. The Committee's role is to advocate, educate, celebrate, and advise on equity, diversity, anti-discrimination, and inclusion. Both the *Inclusive Communities Committee* and the *Accessibility Advisory Committee* are able to promote inclusion by dispelling myths around disabilities. Understanding that accessibility is a basic **human right** is the first step in the removal of barriers. Recognizing that disabilities are visible and invisible will assist in removing attitudinal, physical, organizational, information or communication, and technology barriers and obstacles.

In the past, most people viewed a disability as a medical condition and expects the person with the disability to change to fit with society. People believed that the cause of disability is an "impairment" belonging to the individual. Thus, it is primarily the **individual's** responsibility to spend whatever time, effort and money is necessary to bring themselves up to a benchmark set for the majority of people without a disability.

But society is changing. Today, most people consider the person's needs within society. They view a disability as an aspect of diversity, rather than a medical condition. Instead of putting the burden of responsibility on the individual with a disability, we now focus on what barriers are created by society and how these barriers can be removed. It is society's responsibility to change, not solely the disabled person's.



# NS ACCESSIBILITY ACT

## In 2017, the Nova Scotia Accessibility Act was passed.

For the very first time in Nova Scotia, legislation was developed with input from the community. It was that input, from persons with disabilities, which ensured accessibility is viewed as a human right under the Act. The Act was a critical step in demonstrating a commitment to a more equitable and barrier-free province for all Nova Scotians. Its goal is to prevent and remove barriers that restrict people with disabilities from fully participating in society. We as Nova Scotians are now committing to a more equitable and accessible province with a timeline of the year 2030

Legislation alone will not make Nova Scotia accessible. Change is required to create equitable opportunities for all, irrespective of individual differences. Change requires a culture shift and change can only be achieved by listening to disabled persons and their families. We must understand that access no longer refers to a narrow list of accommodations aimed at wheelchair users. Overcoming the difficulties faced by people with disabilities requires interventions to remove environmental and social barriers.

All Nova Scotians must value the contributions of persons with disabilities, and all play a part in making Nova Scotia barrier-free. Everyone has the right to fully participate in their community and barriers should not exist to limit that participation. Support, understanding what barriers are, the removal and prevention of barriers, and the recognition that abilities vary, all contribute to meaningful access.

**Nova Scotia  
will achieve its  
goal of being  
accessible by  
2030.**



**Meaningful access is access that meets the real accessibility needs of all users of a site or service, regardless of their ability.**

To effect change, a **plan** is required. The Accessibility Act provides the framework for making this a reality for our province. It aims to improve accessibility in the areas of the *built environment, education, employment, goods and services, information and communication, and transportation.*

The Province has outlined priorities and key actions for how Nova Scotia will achieve its goal of being accessible by 2030. It is fully detailed in a document titled "Access by Design 2030 – Achieving an Accessible Nova Scotia". It is a strategy for all of us; government, businesses, communities, and individuals, to collaborate, to learn, to become aware, to build capacity and to remove barriers on issues related to meaningful accessibility.

## Access by Design 2030 is based on the following principles:



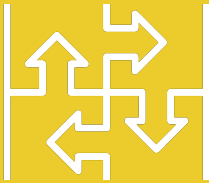
### Human Rights & Social Justice

Work will be guided by principles of human rights & social justice, including respect for difference, dignity, independence, & autonomy; equitable access & opportunity, non-discrimination; & full participation & inclusion in society.



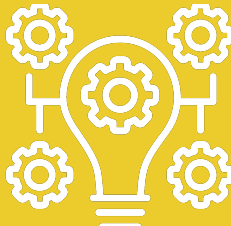
### Engagement & Collaboration

Work will be guided by the experience of persons with disabilities. It will be supported by the strength of existing community-based programs and the development of collaborative, cross-sectoral initiatives.



### Coordination & Harmonization

Accessibility initiatives and strategies will align across organizations and all levels of government. Current practices will be integrated into the work.



### Innovation & Modernization

Innovation and modernization will be employed in the development of initiatives and the allocation of resources.

# DISABILITIES IN NEW GLASGOW

According to Statistics Canada, 30% of Nova Scotians aged 15 years and older identify as having at least one disability.

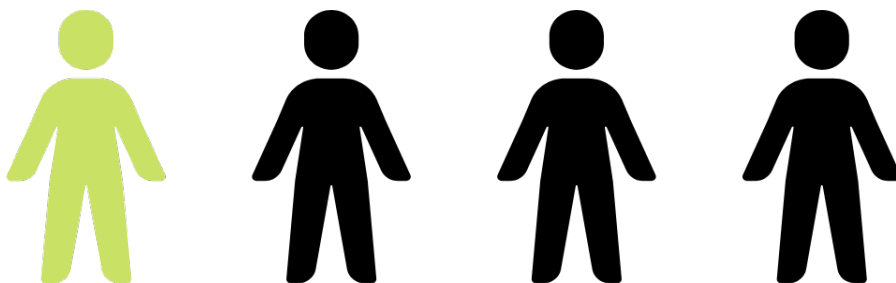
**~230,000  
NOVA  
SCOTIANS**

That is nearly **230,000** Nova Scotians. This is the largest percentage of any Canadian province. And from the 2016 census, **20% of the population are over 65 years of age**. This percentage will increase to about 25 per cent of the population, or **1 in 4, by 2030**. Both these statistics indicate that the number of Nova Scotians with disabilities will rise as our population ages. The fact is older adults are more likely to have disabilities than younger people. The percentage of older adults is higher in New Glasgow compared to the provincial average.

Access, today, is much more than a short list of items related to wheeled mobility devices (wheelchairs). We now recognize that the accessibility of any given situation needs to be evaluated on the entire user experience, rather than by simply evaluating its physical access features. We must remember that people who do not have a disability are only “temporarily able bodied”. Disabilities can affect anyone at any time and can be for a very short duration or a long period of time. There are varying degrees of disabilities and people can experience more than one type of disability at a time.

Accessible environments today must also anticipate the needs of older adults and seniors as they become the majority of people with disabilities in the coming years. As people advance in age, many experience significantly reduced agility, mobility, visual acuity and hearing.

Ultimately, municipal decision makers need to recognize that everyone, regardless of age or ability, has the same right to full participation in our communities.



**Over 65  
years of age  
by 2024**

## Statistics Canada identifies ten (10) types of disabilities:

<b>SEEING</b>	Persons with a seeing disability are identified as persons whose daily activities are limited because of difficulties with their ability to see.
<b>HEARING</b>	Persons with a hearing disability are identified as persons whose daily activities are limited because of difficulties with their ability to hear.
<b>MOBILITY</b>	Persons with a mobility disability are identified as persons whose daily activities are limited because of difficulties with their ability to move around, including walking or using stairs
<b>FLEXIBILITY</b>	Persons with a flexibility disability are identified as persons whose daily activities are limited because of difficulties bending down or reaching.
<b>DEXTERITY</b>	Persons with a dexterity disability are identified as persons whose daily activities are limited because of difficulties using their fingers to grasp small objects.
<b>PAIN</b>	Persons with a pain-related disability are identified as persons whose daily activities are limited because of pain that is always present or due to periods of pain that reoccur.
<b>LEARNING</b>	Persons with a learning disability are identified as persons whose daily activities are limited because of a self-identified learning difficulty or a diagnosed learning disability.
<b>DEVELOPMENTAL</b>	Persons with a developmental disability are identified as persons who have been diagnosed with this condition, regardless of the level of difficulty of the activity limitations reported.
<b>MENTAL</b>	Persons with a mental health-related disability are identified as persons whose daily activities are limited because of an emotional, psychological or mental health condition.
<b>MEMORY</b>	Persons with a memory disability are identified as persons whose daily activities are limited because of difficulties with ongoing memory problems or periods of confusion.

The list above is not meant to entirely cover all individual's experience in living with a disability. It is meant to show that there is a wide range of occurrences that relate to the interaction between features of a person's body and experiences in society.

Overcoming the difficulties faced by people with disabilities requires interventions to remove barriers. **That is the primary goal of this Plan.**

# REQUIREMENTS

The act states that accessibility plans must be updated every three years

## Town of New Glasgow's Requirements under the Act:

Under the Accessibility Act, municipalities, universities, and other organizations are prescribed as public sector bodies. Public sector bodies must:

- Establish an Accessibility Advisory Committee.
- Develop an accessibility plan by 1 April 2022.

The Act states that accessibility plans must be updated every three years. **As accessibility standards are implemented, those standards should be integrated into your plan.**

The plan will ensure persons with disabilities in Nova Scotia have equitable access to:



Buildings and outdoor spaces in which Nova Scotians live, work, learn, and play



Transportation



Inclusive public & post-secondary education



Goods & Services



Employment



Information & Communication

The Town's Plan will follow a similar path as the Province's with the exception of **Education**. The Town's examination of education will concentrate on **Awareness and Capacity Building**.

### **The Plan must include:**

- Measures taken and intended to take to identify, remove and prevent barriers.
- Measures to assess policies, programs, practices and services for their effect on accessibility for persons with disabilities.
- Must seek input from persons with disabilities and representative organizations.

*IMPORTANT: As Standards are developed and released from the Province, The Town will have to re-visit each area of focus to better understand how to provide access.*

## Community Engagement Continues:

It is the intention of the AAC to obtain further feedback once the Plan is released to Town staff and to the general public. This important step is more fully described under "**Plan Implementation**" and is critical in ensuring that the Accessibility Advisory Committee "got it right". The AAC will use a survey tool to gather comments, ideas, and information from a wider section of the community and hopefully learn from people sharing their lived experiences.



The AAC would like to support businesses and other groups in our community in the advancement of true access. Working with the Town's Business Advisory Committee (BAC) and the Pictou County Chamber of Commerce is one idea to strengthen the commitment of the Town of New Glasgow. The Accessibility Advisory Committee believes that preparing and submitting the Plan is not the end of the task. The AAC will continue to work with the community and has ideas to shape communities that are welcoming places for all people. One such idea is the "Sunflower Lanyard Program". It would be great if our business community adopted the program which is meant to identify people with hidden or invisible disabilities, should they choose. Sometimes people just need a bit of extra support while shopping or obtaining services. The Sunflower Lanyard Program was first introduced by Gatwick airport (England) in 2016. It provides a discreet way to signal that a passenger may need additional help or some extra time to complete a task while travelling through the airport. We believe this idea can work in our Town.

# AREAS OF FOCUS

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# THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

## What is the built environment?

The Rick Hansen Foundation defines the built environment as the “physical spaces and places where people live, work, learn, and play”. According to the dictionary, the built environment refers to man-made structures, features, and facilities viewed collectively as an environment in which people live and work.

Built environment, under the control of the Town, include public buildings and public spaces that are used by the public for a particular reason. Town owned lands not developed or outside the limits of the specific use are not included. For example, a street reserve, not developed, would not fall into this category. A list of buildings and public spaces are attached in Appendix A.

### ***Our Commitment***

Accessibility that meets the real needs of all users of a space is the goal and commitment of the Town of New Glasgow. Town buildings (owned or leased) and public spaces, will be accessible to people regardless of their age or ability. Buildings that are leased or operated by others (ex. community centers, library, marina), will be accessible from a “landlord” perspective. The Town will encourage “tenants” to eliminate barriers under their control (ex. clearing paths of travel). Users may be the public or employees of the Town. Top priority will be buildings and spaces primarily accessed by the general public. The removal of barriers in spaces that restrict the use by Town employees are also high priorities.

# ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE

## IDENTIFYING BARRIERS

- The Town performs a bi-annual condition assessment of its sidewalks. Engineering staff rate each block of sidewalk throughout town.
- The Town performs scheduled facility inspections of its buildings, parks and trails.
- The Town Engineer is a RHFAC professional.
- In 2019 the Town participated in a feasibility study called "Trails for Active Transportation". That study identified deficiencies in lighting, wayfinding, and in the trail connectivity across East River Road. Work is underway to address these barriers.

60

**tactile warning surface indicators (TWSIs) are installed in the town.**

## REMOVING BARRIERS

- The Town invests in an annual Capital Sidewalk Program each year to construct new sidewalks and replace deteriorated sidewalks based on the sidewalk ratings. The Town has been constructing proper curb ramps (curb cuts) for many years.
- The Town has been installing tactile warning surface indicators (TWSIs) in curb ramps since 2017.
- Accessible pedestrian buttons have been the standard for many years. The Town now installs controls that are touchless and with Bluetooth capability.
- Snow is removed from the downtown core within a few days of a major storm event.
- Improvements made to Library entrance and parking in 2019.
- Vast improvements to crosswalk safety. Zebra style markings are the standard within school zones, on arterial class streets and at mid-block crossings. New Glasgow was one of the first municipalities in NS to install RRFB's (rectangular rapid flashing beacons).
- Some improvements to lighting of public spaces including streets, sidewalks, downtown core, trails and parks.
- Accessible picnic tables installed in 2020. Benches installed on trails and in downtown core.
- Land Use By-Law does allow for Garden Suites which aids in the concept of "aging in-place".

**\$200,000 is invested in the Capital Sidewalk program annually.**

## PREVENTING BARRIERS

- A new Snow/Ice Control policy was adopted in 2019. The level of service with respect to sidewalks was increased.
- Engineer made a presentation to the Pictou County Chamber of Commerce about accessibility, RHFAC Certification, and funding programs (Business ACCESS-Ability Grant)



## BARRIERS

- The Building Code does not address outdoor spaces. And it is a minimum standard.
- Some sidewalks, walkways, and pathways do not meet the definition of accessible.
- The Engineering & Public Works building is inaccessible. Citizens must access this building for Development, Planning, and Building Inspection activities.
- The Town Hall is not accessible. Some improvements have been made over the years, but the facility falls short under the definition of meaningful access. An example is interior circulation. A disabled person wishing to attend the Council meeting on the second floor would need assistance to navigate the interior route. Or a partially sighted person would have difficulty using the stairs.
- Many accessible parking spaces throughout Town are truly not accessible and do not meet CSA B651 standards. An example is the spaces on Provost St. These spaces do not have a proper curb cut (ramp) and the dimensions are not correct.
- Accessible parking spaces are limited.
- Most signage and wayfinding elements do not incorporate the principles of accessibility.
- Most staff do not have a working knowledge of Universal Design. Folks still tend to think of "wheelchairs" when considering access and barriers to access. Most people think "access" is a code compliance issue.
- Town buildings and public spaces have not been formally audited to determine the level of meaningful accessibility.

# ACTIONS (top priority actions are **bolded**)

## 1. ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESSES/POLICIES/TRAINING TO BE IMPLEMENTED

- **Allocate a portion of the annual Capital Budget to improving access in our Town. Improvement measures must be prioritized from audits performed.**
- **Ensure managers responsible for preparing annual Operations & Maintenance (O&M) budget include accessibility improvements in their submission for approval. Consider “access” as a top priority similar to “safety” issues. Many items identified in the audits, can easily be addressed under O&M.**
- Update Sub-Division By-Law to ensure accessibility elements are included in language and engineering standards (specs and drawings).
- Update Land Use By-Law to include specific accessibility language.
- **Ensure any new Town building, including major renovations, meet the intent of the Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification (RHFAC) gold standard.**
- For all lease agreements with private entities, provide language in lease to prevent barriers. (Ex. ensure outdoor furniture and signage does not create hazard for visually impaired persons).
- Promote the RHFAC Certification program to developers.
- **Work with the BAC to promote accessibility in our business community.**
- **Seek funding through the Community ACCESS-Ability Program and the Enabling Accessibility Fund.**
- Introduce staff to the principles and goals of Universal Design. Educate all on the economic and social benefits that are gained by having a universally designed environment.

## 2. BUILDING IMPROVEMENTS, CONSTRUCTION, ETC.

- **Perform accessibility audits of all Town owned buildings. Vehicle access and approach shall be included in the assessment. Top priorities are:**
  - **Town Hall**
  - **Glasgow Square**
  - **Engineering & Public Works (1)**
  - **Library (2)**
  - **Community Centers**
  - **Fire Hall – second floor**

*(1) The Eng & PW building will be relocated to 624 East River Rd. Currently a conceptual design is being developed to consolidate PW services. Accessibility will be an important part of the work. However, if the renovations cannot be completed within two years, the existing building must be made accessible or staff must be relocated.*

*(2) The library will be developing its own Accessibility Plan. The Town and Library will need to coordinate efforts to remove barriers.*



- **Perform accessibility audits of all Town owned Public Spaces. Priorities are:**
  - **Trails (Samson Trail, Pioneer Trail, & Johnny Miles Trails)**
  - **Parks (Carmichael Park, Laurie Park, Rotary Park, Africentric Park, Murdock Park)**
- **Correct improperly constructed accessible spaces as identified on the audits. Use CSA B651 Standard and RHFAC guidelines ensure spaces are usable and meets the real needs of the user. All buildings used by the public must meet the minimum requirement of the NSBCR, Schedule C.**
- Continue to invest in the Capital Sidewalk Program.
- Increase the number of on-street accessible spaces. Spaces must be constructed on level, stable surfaces.
- Ensure a clear path of travel for all users. Place street furniture, planters, signage, etc., away from pedestrian routes. Ensure projections and fixed objects are cane detectable.
- Place suitable seating along paths of travel to allow users to rest.
- **There are some features or key measures of accessibility that are fundamental to all elements in the built environment. The following areas must be looked at, across all buildings and public spaces, to ensure barriers are not present:**
  - **Space and Clearance**
  - **Reach Ranges**
  - **Signage/Wayfinding**
  - **Colour Contrast**
  - **Lighting & Illumination**
  - **Slope and Level Change**
  - **Surfaces**

*The Director of Engineering has specific training in the fundamentals listed above.*

- **Install hearing loops (audio induction loops) for persons with hearing disabilities at key locations (Council Chambers, Town Hall front counter, Glasgow Square Theatre).**
- Ensure building access control measures do not create barriers for people with disabilities.
- Ensure signage at the entrance and exit of businesses do not obstruct the view of motorists and sidewalk users. Planning & Development and Engineering to implement process.
- Maintain sidewalks to remove obstructions like overhanging branches, signage, snow and ice.
- Increase the provision of accessible public washrooms, particularly in the downtown core. Ensure washrooms that do exist are accessible and are open for reasonable times.

*Note: The Accessibility Audits will be conducted by staff and reviewed with the AAC. The AAC knows that presently there are many deficiencies in many Town buildings. But instead of listing specific barriers, improvements under this section are general in nature. An example is the stairs in the Town Hall. The handrail is not to code; the treads do not have color-contrasting strip on nosing; and there is no tactile attention indicator at the top. These deficiencies will be picked up in the audit to be performed. The important piece is that the Town Hall is improved in a timely manner to ensure all users, staff and public have full use of the facility.*



# GOODS & SERVICES

## What are goods & services?

The Town provides numerous services to citizens, businesses, and visitors. Services overlap many other areas of focus. Snow clearing affects the built environment; correspondence to customers is affected by information & communication; and recreation programs are offered in a learning environment. Public meetings and committees; the maintenance of streets, active transportation networks, and sidewalks; the supply of safe, clean drinking water; sewer services; recreation programming, Town Hall administration and customer service; and emergency services, including REMO, are examples of services/amenities provided by the Town of New Glasgow.

### ***Our Commitment***

New Glasgow will provide goods and services to its residents, businesses, customers, and visitors in an equitable fashion. Users or recipients of the service, regardless of age or ability will have access to all goods and services provided by the Town. Policies and procedures related to “service levels” in the delivery of goods and services will be enhanced to include ‘access’ as a framework key element. Recommendations to Council will include “accessibility” criteria (similar to sustainability) when submitted by staff.

# ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE

## IDENTIFYING BARRIERS

- The Town partnered with the Municipality of the County of Pictou in the development of an "Age Friendly Community" plan in 2014. While this plan is now getting old, the core principles of the work continue to impact decisions by the Town.

## REMOVING BARRIERS

- Citizens have the ability to pay their water bill, taxes and parking violations online, thus eliminating the need to visit Town Hall for bill payments.
- There is a high level of service for maintaining streets, sidewalks, trails, parks and public spaces. The approved annual Operating and Maintenance budget has specific categories dealing with Town assets.
- Covid-19 has accelerated the need for staff to work remotely from home. The Town has invested in IT technology to allow for video conferencing/meetings. This improvement measure overlaps "information & communication" and has a directly access benefit for many users.

## PREVENTING BARRIERS

- Staff training on mental health. Many staff have signed up for the "Not Myself Today" program offered by the Canadian Mental Health Association. Staff have also shared a guide titled "Mental Wellness in the Workplace After Covid-19" created by the Pictou County Mental Wellness Roundtable. Seven staff have participated in a certificate program from UNB for Psychologically Safe Leadership. These are a few examples showing that the Town is committed to training related to mental health and addictions.

## BARRIERS

- Staff, especially those who interact daily with the public, do not have formal training in diversity, equity and inclusion training.
- The Town Hall front desk is not accessible. The entrance to the front counter is not accessible. While these are physical barriers, they directly relate to the provision of services.
- Access to pedestrian signals is sometimes inaccessible after a snow event.
- The Town's website is not accessible to persons with visual impairments.
- No staff member is trained in sign language (ex. ASL).

# **ACTIONS** (top priority actions are **bolded**)

## 1. ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESSES/POLICIES/TRAINING TO BE IMPLEMENTED

- Provide training to key staff to highlight the importance of respectful communication with people with disabilities. Awareness of appropriate, inclusive language and etiquette will help individuals feel confident when interacting with people with disabilities. This training may be part of the larger topic on inclusion and diversity.
- Review current policies, with an inclusion and diversity lens, to determine if changes are warranted.
- Provide relevant service information, in an accessible format, to our customers.
- **Add an accessibility criterion to recommendations/reports sent to Council for services that impact the public.**
- **Develop a Town Customer Service Policy to ensure accessibility is addressed. Ensure the policy is “first voice” driven.**
- Review all services delivered by each Department to ensure fair access.

## 2. BUILDING IMPROVEMENTS, CONSTRUCTION, ETC.

- Ensure services provide at the Engineering & Public Works are accessible.
- Ensure services provide at the Town Hall are accessible.
- Implement recommendations/correct deficiencies from building audits that relate to the provision of goods and services.





# INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION

Sharing information is an important part of the day-to-day operations and management of Town activities. Information is communicated internally and externally. There is a wide range of formats and many ways information is conveyed and received. Printed media still remains a large part of information distribution and correspondence. Examples are minutes of meetings; written policies, by-laws, and procedures; proclamations; advertisements; billings; and legal documents. Electronic formats such as emails, attachments, presentations, and scans are also used every day as a primary method of communication. Today, an online presence is required to communicate, and the Town certainly uses social media as an information tool. The Town uses Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Town website, online surveys, etc., to share information and collect data and material. But information and communication extend to many other formats and media. Internally building signage and wayfinding, street signs, kiosks, trail information signage, and evacuation building plans all must be communicated effectively to the user. Physical characteristics such as mounting height, glare, lack of light, color contrast, lack of symbols, and poorly chosen fonts and sizes used, present barriers to many people. Many times, information is not presented in multiple formats and therefore is not considered "perceptible information" under the Universal Design principles.

How communication is received is just as important as how it is presented. It is accessible online (WCAG 2.1)? Are assistive listening devices provided? Do our front-line customer service staff have training related to communicating with people with disabilities? Do video monitors exist for public information dissemination? Are multiple formats used (ex. Braille and voice)?

## ***Our Commitment***

Information and communications delivered by the Town will be clear and accessible to all people regardless of age and ability. Training and awareness will be provided so that all understand that information and communication is much more than ensuring a sans serif font is used at a minimum 12-size point. Information and communication are a complex area of meaningful accessibility that requires multiple strategies to be effective to the broadest group possible including people with a wide range of sensory abilities, intellectual abilities, literacy levels, languages, and physical characteristics.

# ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE

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## IDENTIFYING BARRIERS

- The Town recognizes that the municipal website is not very user friendly. In 2021, a website development company was hired to revamp the website. Accessibility improvements are forthcoming.

## REMOVING BARRIERS

- Covid-19 has accelerated the need for staff to work remotely from home. The Town has invested in IT technology to allow for video conferencing/meetings. This improvement measure overlaps "information & communication" and has a directly access benefit for many users.

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**2021**

marked the beginning of the town website update process.

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## BARRIERS

- Signage and interior wayfinding do not include braille.
- Not all information is able to be read with screen readers or similar technology.
- Printed material and electronic communications are not in consistent, accessible formats. Some materials are printed in serif font (ex. Times New Roman) for example.
- People with hearing disabilities cannot participate in Council meetings or other similar types of Town activities as no assistive listening devices exist.
- The Town website is not accessible to people with visual impairments.
- Plain language is not always used.
- Public notices are not provided in multiple formats to ensure a wide distribution of the message.
- Meetings are not live streamed, or video taped so that closed capturing could be used afterwards.



## **ACTIONS** (top priority actions are **bolded**)

### 1. ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESSES/POLICIES/TRAINING TO BE IMPLEMENTED

- Develop a policy on accessible communication in different medium/formats (printed, email, electronic, online, presentations, etc.) **Consult with Communications Nova Scotia and other relevant organizations to ensure the policy is encompassing of all disabilities.**
- Provide training to key staff on respectful communication, etiquette, and plain language.
- Develop a policy on signage and wayfinding. **Include braille requirements.**

### 2. BUILDING IMPROVEMENTS, CONSTRUCTION, ETC.

- Install assistive listening technology in Council Chambers and at Glasgow Square
- **Ensure the new Town Website meets current Web Content accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.1).**
- Provide ASL and/or CART services at public meetings when requested.
- **Ensure new signage, interior and exterior, is accessible.**
- **Implement recommendations/correct deficiencies from building audits that affect information and communications.**
- **Correct any barriers that directly impact safety, evacuation, and emergency services within buildings.**
- **Work cooperatively with the Town's IT Department to ensure communication technology, systems, information, services, procedures and practices follow best practices.**



In New Glasgow, public transportation and transportation infrastructure, is comprised of the following:

- CHAD Transit
- Pictou County Transit
- Licensed taxis
- Vehicle and Active Transportation (AT) networks (streets, sidewalks and trails)

**CHAD Transit** continues to provide a valuable service in our community. CHAD's mission is "community transportation for all". It is recognized for efficient, affordable, and inclusive Pictou County community transportation.

***Our Commitment***

Equitable access in transportation will be a priority of the Town of New Glasgow. Support to PC Transit and CHAD will continue. The Town will continue to support and promote PC Transit in the hope it is expanded to a more regional service.

# ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE

## IDENTIFYING BARRIERS

- As mentioned in the Built Environment section, an active transportation (AT) was completed in 2019. While not solely dedicated to accessibility issues, it did identify many barriers to access.
- A feasibility study was completed in April 2019 for a Pictou County fixed transit route.

## REMOVING BARRIERS

- PC Transit was launched in May of 2021. This pilot transit service will help improve access.
- CHAD Transit

30,000

rides are given by CHAD Transit each year.

## BARRIERS

- The fixed route is a pilot project and the routes do not provide full coverage throughout town.
- Transit stops do not currently have seating or shelters in place. Stop information is not truly accessible. Not all wait areas are paved.
- Some persons with disabilities would only be able to use CHAD for their transit needs.
- The bus under the pilot program is not considered accessible (i.e., announcement, signage, boarding features, storage, etc.)

## ACTIONS (top priority actions are **bolded**)

### 1. ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESSES/POLICIES/TRAINING TO BE IMPLEMENTED

- **Support the expansion of the bus service.**
- **Ensure those involved in specifying a new bus, understand and include accessible design features. Expand further than wheeled mobility devices.**

### 2. BUILDING IMPROVEMENTS, CONSTRUCTION, ETC.

- If current Transit pilot is made permanent or expanded, install seating at key stop locations.
- **Perform an audit of existing and proposed route stops.**



# EMPLOYMENT

The Town of New Glasgow employs a wide variety of people in a wide variety of roles. Employees are physically located in different areas throughout Town. The Town is supported by employed staff, elected officials, students, volunteers, contractors and service providers. In many departments, an aging staff exist. Some employees do have varying degrees of disabilities and some disabilities are non-visual. Routinely employees are temporarily disabled even if for a short period of time (Ex. WCB, injuries, surgery, etc.)

The question is “how does the Town attract competent, valuable, energetic persons with disabilities who can contribute to the Town of New Glasgow team?”. The answer is the removal of barriers. Support is required to ensure equal access to employment for persons with disabilities. Meaningful employment will result when barriers are removed. The removal of barriers in the built environment is a given, but so too is the removal of attitudinal barriers, organizational or systemic barriers, information and communication barriers, and technology barriers. It is not enough to provide a physical accommodation in a workspace.

## ***Our Commitment***

The Town will ensure the employees dignity, safety, and sense of being included is addressed in creating a meaningful work environment. The Town will do a better job in recruitment and retention of disabled employees. It will receive and provide training of what 'accommodation' really means in today's society. The Town will support working from home and flexible hours, invest in adaptive technology, and will anticipate the real needs of its employees.

# ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE

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## IDENTIFYING BARRIERS

- The Town is very good to accommodate employees who may be temporarily disabled due to an accident or illness. The Town does support the concept of “duty to accommodate” and works with WCB and health care providers to ensure employees return to work quickly

## REMOVING BARRIERS

- Many staff and elected official now have the ability to work remotely. Technology has also reduced the need to meet in person, thus reducing barriers introduced in the built environment.
- iPads and laptops has promoted the use of accessible features and font and zoom control.

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## PREVENTING BARRIERS

- The Town has invested in some ergonomic equipment, mainly adjustable desks and fitted chairs.

## BARRIERS

- The Town does not have dedicated Human Resources staff to assist with employee's individual needs. The employee would have to deal directly with their supervisor. This is not necessarily a barrier in all cases but could be.
- Staff and senior management have limited training in recognizing barriers that negatively impact employees. Not all staff and senior management are trained in diversity, equity, and inclusion. Education on “accommodation”
- Not all Town facilities are barrier free. An employee, for example, who uses a wheeled mobility device could not work at the Engineering & Public Works building.
- On internal and external job posting the following is included “The Town of New Glasgow values diversity and inclusiveness, and encourages applications from all qualified candidates including Indigenous, visible minorities, and women.” There is, however, no real guidance in the Fair Hiring Policy to deal with persons with disabilities for example.

# **ACTIONS** (top priority actions are **bolded**)

## **1. ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESSES/POLICIES/TRAINING TO BE IMPLEMENTED**

- **Update the Town's Fair Hiring Policy (and other employment policies) to include specific language on employing/recruiting people with disabilities, accommodations, and retention of disabled persons. Clearly define an approved strategy for recruitment.**
- **Provide training to key staff on hiring people with disabilities. Organizations like the Neil Squire Society can assist the Town on the use technology to empower employees with disabilities and ensure economic and social inclusiveness for all.**
- **Build and enhance relationships with community groups and organizations, particularly in the area of employment and support for employment.**
- **Survey existing employees to determine a baseline of disabilities and abilities.**

## **2. BUILDING IMPROVEMENTS, CONSTRUCTION, ETC.**

- **Implement recommendations/correct deficiencies from building audits that affect employment.**





# AWARENESS & CAPACITY BUILDING

The Town of New Glasgow recognizes that equitable and fair access is a human right. The Town understands that a shift in culture starts with awareness and the use of appropriate language and etiquette. Awareness and capacity building is considered Education in our plan and is the foundation of all other areas of focus. Dignity and respect begin with using "people first" language. Something as simple as using the phrase "person who uses a wheelchair" changes your perception and sets the tone for the collaboration, learning, and exchange of ideas and solutions.

## ***Our Commitment***

The Town of New Glasgow will continue to cultivate a culture where inclusion and diversity is celebrated. Education through capacity building and formal and informal training of staff and Council, is a necessary part of the Plan and is a key factor of success. The Town will be a champion of "meaningful access" in our community. It will demonstrate, through action, its obligation to educate our community.

## **ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE**

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### **IDENTIFYING, REMOVING, & PREVENTING BARRIERS**

- The Director of Engineering & Public Works was the first municipal Town Engineer to become RHFAC Certified. His work on the Built Environment Standards Committee has benefited the Town of New Glasgow immensely.
- The Town Engineer has made Accessibility presentations at the Pictou County Chamber of Commerce and at the Nova Scotia Community College.
- The Engineer is currently performing a built environment accessibility audit at the PC Wellness Center. This is a form of knowledge transfer.

# BARRIERS

- Some people still think that removing barriers are costly endeavours.
- Some people do not understand the benefits of accommodations.
- Some builders see following the Code standard as onerous and expensive. They only do the minimal work necessary to pass inspection. Education is required.

## **ACTIONS** (top priority actions are **bolded**)

### 1. ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESSES/POLICIES/TRAINING TO BE IMPLEMENTED

- **As mentioned in every area of focus above, training is paramount to understand the issue of access and how people are affected by not removing barriers.**
- **Promote the fact that many accommodations, many accessible measures, and many policy changes are at no or low cost with a huge return on investment.**
- **Educate people on the economic benefit of hiring persons with disabilities. Obtain impact information from the Conference Board of Canada or other similar organization.**
- **Support organizations like Summer Street Industries to build capacity and improve access in all areas, especially employment.**

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**1st in NS**

The Director of Engineering & Public Works was the first municipal engineer to become RHFAC Certified.

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# PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

## ***Responsibilities***

The ACC is a Committee of Council. As such, Town Council is directly responsible for overseeing the committee. The Plan is was adopted by Council on April 19th, 2022. The CAO is responsible for the overall implementation of the Plan as it is inter-departmental.

The Director of Engineering & Public Works fills the role of Accessibility Coordinator. He is RHFAC Certified and acts as the technical specialist.

The Accessibility Advisory Committee (ACC) is responsible for the review of the Plan and provides comment and recommendations to Council.

## ***Schedule***

All top priorities will be implemented within one two full (2) fiscal years following the approval of the Standards. Budget preparation and approval must proceed completion of the task. Many items identified in the plan are not capital intensive and can be completed within the 2022-2023 fiscal year.

## ***Monitoring***

The AAC will continue to meet throughout the year. The plan requires continual input from the public even after the initial Plan (2022-23) is adopted by Council. The AAC encourages input from the community, in particular, from our disabled citizens, caregivers, family and support networks. First Voice is a fundamental pillar of implementation. Monitoring and improving, by way of continuous learning, from those with lived experiences ensures the plan is a living document.

An annual status check or report card will be prepared to evaluate the success of the plan. This annual review will allow for an adjustment in the progress in removing barriers and promoting meaningful access and is critical in measuring the performance of the corrective measures.

**As new Standards are developed and adopted, the AAC will have to review the improvement measures originally identified.** Annual recommendations may be expanded as everyone learns together. The status report, along with recommendations, will be provided to Council in March of each year.

The AAC will update the plan every three (3) years based on the annual report card and feedback received. The update will be due in April 2025.

## ***Evaluation & Update***

The Terms of Reference mandates that the Plan be reviewed and updated every three (3) years at a minimum. A Plan Towards Meaningful Access will be updated by March of 2025. Community consultation and the annual status reports will weight heavily into the partial updating of the plan. As mentioned above, new Standards developed to support the Accessibility Act, will help define access in all areas of focus. The Town of New Glasgow will lead the three-year review.

## ***Responding to Questions & Complaints***

The Plan and the annual status check (report card) are public documents. Everyone has the right to comment or ask questions about the process. Questions, concerns, and feedback are welcomed in any format. One direct method is by using the email:

[accessibility@newglasgow.ca](mailto:accessibility@newglasgow.ca)

The Accessibility Coordinator will be the first point of contact. Questions, comments, and complaints should be directed to the coordinator. If communication is received or channeled through other staff, the AAC, social media, Councillors, etc., the Coordinator will obtain the information and respond back to the citizen. The Accessibility Coordinator will respond in a timely manner. Depending on the nature of the query, a 2-3 business day response is expected. Consultation with the AAC or Town staff may be warranted therefore more than one response may be needed.

The public also has the right to express their opinion to Council should they not agree with the Accessibility Coordinator. These types of issues may be referred back to the AAC. After a review of the issue, a recommendation will be forwarded to Council.

As part of the annual review (report card) process, any communication from the public throughout the year, that may impact the Plan, will be provided. This type of input from the public is valuable in assessing the impact/progress of the plan.



# REFERENCES & APPENDICES

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# REFERENCES

## (WITHOUT CITATION)

THE ACCESSIBILITY PLANNING TOOLKIT FOR MUNICIPALITIES – NOVA SCOTIA ACCESSIBILITY DIRECTORATE DECEMBER 2019

ACCESS BY DESIGN 2030 – DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE SEPTEMBER 2018

GOVERNMENT OF NOVA SCOTIA ACCESSIBILITY PLAN 2018-2021

WOLFVILLE ACCESS BY DESIGN – AN ACCESSIBILITY PLAN FOR 2019-2022

RFHAC ACCESSIBILITY ASSESSOR TRAINING (STUDENT GUIDE 2018)



# APPENDICES

## 1. LIST OF BUILDINGS AND PUBLIC SPACES OWNED BY THE TOWN

			Annex A
<b>TOWN OF NEW GLASGOW - BUILDINGS &amp; PUBLIC SPACES</b>			
<b>Buildings</b>			
ID	BUILDING	STREET NAME	CIVIC #
1	Ward 2 Recreation Center	HIGH ST	534
2	Marina	GLASGOW ST	15
3	Town Hall	PROVOST ST	111
4	Carmichael Stewart House	TEMPERANCE STREET	86
5	Library/Fire Station	DALHOUSIE ST	180
6	Farmers Market Bldgs (2)	GLASGOW ST	261/265
7	Ward 1 Recreation Center	BROTHER ST	487
8	Engineering Bldg.	PARK ST	235
9	Env. Services	PARK ST	233
10	PW Maintenance Facility	EAST RIVER RD	624
11	Westside Community Center	LAVINIA ST	181
12	Police Station	PARK ST	225
13	Glasgow Square	RIVERSIDE PARKWAY	155
<b>Sports Fields/Play Areas</b>			
FID	NAME	Type	
1	NERC_baseball	Sports Field	
2	NERC_Rinks & Tennis	Sports Field	
3	Tartan Field	Sports Field	
4	Ward 1_Basketball and Field	Sports Field	
5	Annex Field_McLean St./Albert St.	Sports Field	
6	SW Weeks Sports Complex	Sports Field	
7	Westside Community Center	Sports Field	
<b>Parks</b>			
FID	Name	Street	
1	Africentric Heritage Park	Vale Road	
2	Carmichael Park	George Street	
3	Goodman Rotary Park	Arch Street	
4	Laurie Park	Dalhousie Street	
5	Murdock Park	Provost Street	
6	Riverside Drive Park	Riverside Parkway	
<b>Playgrounds</b>			
FID	Name	Civic#	
1	Martin Avenue Playground	Martin Avenue	
1	Mountain Road-Serria Drive Playground	Hillcrest St.	
2	Munroe Avenue Playground	38 Munroe Avenue	
3	Scott Weeks Parkdale Sport Centre Playground	Park Road	
4	Ward #1 Social & Recreation Centre Playground	487 Brother Street	
5	Westside Community Center Playground	181 Elm Street	

## 2. MAP SHOWING TOWN OWNED AREAS

### New Glasgow Public Facilities

April 6, 2022

