

Staff Report

Community Services Department

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REPORT TO: Finance and Corporate Services Committee

DATE OF MEETING: February 13, 2023

SUBMITTED BY: Mark Hildebrand, Director Neighbourhood Programs and Services,
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PREPARED BY: Lolita Paroski, Inclusion Services Coordinator, 519-741-2200
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WARD(S) INVOLVED: All

DATE OF REPORT: January 12, 2023

REPORT NO.: CSD-2023-004

SUBJECT: Accessibility Plan (2023-2027)

RECOMMENDATION:

That the 2023-2027 Accessibility Plan, as attached to Community Services Department report CSD-2023-004, be approved as the Corporation of the City of Kitchener's Accessibility Plan.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS:

- This report supports A Caring Community. In support of the Government of Ontario's direction to become more accessible to people with disabilities by 2025, staff have prepared the updated Accessibility Plan (2023-2027) for Council's consideration.

BACKGROUND:

The Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation 191/11, IASR (Accessibility for Ontarians with a Disabilities Act, AODA, 2005) consists of five standards: information and communications, employment, transportation, design of public spaces and customer service. It should be noted that the requirements in the transportation standard fall within the jurisdiction of the Regional Municipality of Waterloo.

As stipulated in the IASR, public sector organizations are required to establish, implement, maintain, and document a multi-year accessibility plan. The stated purpose of the accessibility plan is to outline an organization's strategy to prevent and remove barriers and to meet the requirements under the Regulation.

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The IASR requires that municipalities complete the following as it relates to the development and implementation of an Accessibility Plan:

- Prepare a multi-year Accessibility Plan
- Consult with an Accessibility Advisory Committee
- Post the Accessibility Plan on their website
- Provide the Accessibility Plan in an alternate format upon request
- Review and update the Accessibility Plan every five years
- Prepare an Annual Status Update on the Accessibility Plan
- Post the Annual Status Update on their website
- Provide the Annual Status Update in an alternate format upon request

The City of Kitchener's previous Accessibility Plan (2018-2022, CSD-18-019) was approved by Council in February 2018. Since that time, the Government of Ontario has not introduced any new compliance deadlines or significant amendments to the AODA legislation or the associated standards. As such, the draft Accessibility Plan (2023-2027) represents a continuation of the previous plan with an emphasis on how the Corporation can go beyond what is outlined in the legislation. The draft plan encourages the Corporation to plan for "accessibility first".

Once approved, the Accessibility Plan (2023-2027) will guide and provide direction to Council and to staff on how to comply with the Corporation's legislative requirements.

REPORT:

To achieve the Government of Ontario's goal of creating a more accessible Ontario on or before January 1st, 2025, the City of Kitchener works closely with the Grand River Accessibility Advisory Committee (GRAAC), community agencies, municipal partners, and staff to carefully plan and implement the legislative standards and regulations as set by the Province.

Creating a more accessible organization requires ongoing planning, adaptive approaches, and a commitment to including accessibility planning from the onset of any project, review, program etc. The requirements in the IASR are ongoing and require organizations to build upon actions already completed. In support of this approach, the draft Accessibility Plan challenges the Corporation to ensure that accessibility is included as a core foundation while building on the work noted in the previous plan.

Annual status updates on the Accessibility Plan are prepared and presented to the Grand River Accessibility Advisory Committee.

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From time to time, the Government of Ontario will introduce periodic reviews or revisions to standards within the IASR, resulting in new compliance deadlines. Should this occur, staff have a process that will support the successful compliance of any amendments.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

This report supports A Caring Community.

- The Grand River Accessibility Advisory Committee provides persons with disabilities the opportunity to discuss, define and address their shared vision regarding the identification, removal, and prevention of barriers in City facilities, programs, goods, policies, and services.
- Consulting with persons with disabilities in an advisory role increases the capacity of the City to ensure a greater degree of access, equity, and inclusion in the life of the Corporation.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

In September 2005, Council approved the establishment of a capital budget (Corporate Accessibility Fund) for the purpose of funding the costs associated with implementing the legislation as well as to fund one-time corporate projects that remove barriers and improve access. This fund will assist in mitigating any financial impacts related to compliance with the legislation or its associated standards. Some examples of projects and services funded by the Corporate Accessibility Fund include; annual licenses and support for NexTALK (TTY), barrier free parking and main entrance accessibility improvements to Harry Class Pool and the installation of an adult change table in the universal washroom at City Hall.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

The Accessibility Plan was developed in consultation with the Grand River Accessibility Advisory Committee and with the input of staff. To assist with the successful implementation of the Accessibility Plan, staff will continue to engage with community agencies that provide services for persons with disabilities.

The Grand River Accessibility Advisory Committee (GRAAC) serves as the Corporation's legislated accessibility advisory committee and provides input, advice, and recommendations as it relates to a broad range of municipal construction/design projects, policies, procedures, and services.

PREVIOUS REPORTS/AUTHORITIES:

- CSD-18-018 Accessibility Plan (2018-2022)

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APPROVED BY: Michael May, DCAO, Community Services Department

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A – Draft Accessibility Plan (2023-2027)