

Priorities Committee Meeting_Jun18_2024

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE AND UPDATE

Accessibility Framework - toward inclusion for all

Report Purpose

The purpose of this report is to share the Accessibility Framework with Priorities Committee.

Our Strategic Goals

Goal 2 - Healthy and Safe Community

Goal 3 - Responsible Development

Goal 4 - Municipal Excellence

Goal 2 Priority - A diverse, welcoming, inclusive, and an accessible community for all

Goal 3 Priority - Investment in our infrastructure that supports development and complete communities

Goal 4 Priority - Optimal use of resources that meets the community's needs

Report

Background

Strathcona County aspires to become Canada's most livable community. As the County becomes more diverse and our recognition of the need for improvements grows, we continue to seek opportunities to ensure our community is inclusive to all people. An accessible and inclusive community is welcoming and safe for people of all abilities who live, work and play here.

In July 2022, the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) recommended that Strathcona County implement a comprehensive approach to accessibility across department business and operational plans. The AAC also recommended that the County employ universal design principles to create seamless user journeys for community members accessing County buildings, services and programs. Following this recommendation, Administration began developing the Accessibility Framework to guide the County.

Recreation, Parks and Culture and Family and Community Services co-led the development of the Accessibility Framework over 2023 and 2024. The project was developed in close consultation with an Internal Working Group comprised of 30+ members from departments across the organization.

Project

The Accessibility Framework is a high-level strategic document intended to support a broad range of decisions and actions across the organization through a shared vision and set of principles. The outcomes focus on supporting action across key focus areas and on the cross-organizational collaboration and cultural shifts required to sustain long-term change. The framework is informed by the experiences of Strathcona County community members, the local disability sector, Council and community advisory committees, and individuals with disabilities in Strathcona County who spoke with us between June 2023 and January 2024. Through interviews and a focus group, individuals with a wide range of disabilities, identities

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and backgrounds shared their experiences navigating the County's built environment, programs, services, information, transportation, employment and procurement processes.

The Internal Working Group co-created the Accessibility Framework by facilitating departmental accessibility conversations and actively participating in design sessions and feedback processes. Working together across the organization allowed us to harness the organization's internal expertise and growing interest in this work as well as develop a framework that meets the broad, complex and changing needs of departments. This internal working group has been an example of strong cross-organizational collaboration and has demonstrated the possibilities that arise when different departments come together to achieve a shared goal.

The framework builds on the many existing accessibility efforts undertaken by staff and departments across the organization and supports a coordinated approach to accessibility across the organization.

Next steps

Many departments are actively engaged in this work and recommendations are already being actioned. Each department will continue to play a leadership role in implementing actions to achieve the outcomes identified, in alignment with their department goals and using the framework as a guide. Administration has committed to collaborating closely across the organization to coordinate accessibility planning and implementation across the key focus areas and on reporting accessibility outcomes, which will be tracked through Financial and Strategic Services.

Council and Committee History

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| October 17, 2023 | The Priorities Committee was provided with an update on the development of a comprehensive county-wide accessibility framework. |
| July 12, 2022 | The Priorities Committee was provided with the 2021 Annual Report of the Accessibility Advisory Committee. |

Other Impacts

Policy: The Accessibility Framework aligns with the Strathcona County Diversity and Inclusion Policy GOV-002-040.

Financial/Budget: There is no immediate impact to the County's budget or financial position at this time, however, any future needs could impact future budgets and the financial capability to delivery services and would be brought forward for Council's consideration during future budget deliberations.

Legislative/Legal: This is a framework/strategy document, there are no immediate legislative impacts. Council could consider passing bylaws/policies to formally adopt the recommendations in the framework. Administration should consider consultant recommendations 16, 17 and 18 when drafting/amending bylaws, policies, procedures and administrative directives. The framework is in alignment with provincial and federal legislation such as the *Alberta Human Rights Act*, the *Accessible Canada Act*, and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Strathcona County's Legislative Services team will be releasing the results of the 2024 municipal census in the fall. The 2024 census includes questions on disability, disability type, language, etc. The census data will likely be useful to support the implementation of some of the recommendations in the framework.

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Interdepartmental: Departments work collaboratively to ensure the Accessibility Framework is adopted and guides improvements within their services and capital planning.

Master Plan/Framework: The 2023-2026 Strategic Plan as well as future master plans and frameworks will support the outcomes of the Accessibility Framework.

Communication Plan

A robust communications strategy has been developed to increase awareness and socialize the Accessibility Framework. This roll-out is for staff only and will not include public communications at this time.

Enclosures

- 1 Strathcona County Accessibility Framework - Toward inclusion for all
- 2 Strathcona County Accessibility Framework Journey Map
- 3 Accessibility Framework presentation