Joint Annual Accessibility Status Report

A SUMMARY OF MIDDLESEX COUNTY AND LOCAL MUNICIPAL PARTNERS ACCOMPLSHMENTS TOWARDS ACCESSIBILITY IN 2021

Objectives and Purpose

This is the sixth Joint Annual Accessibility Status Report update of Middlesex County's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. In 2016, Middlesex County released its second Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, in accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (Ontario Regulation 191/11). The plan outlined our strategy to prevent and remove barriers to accessibility, which included how we will meet phased-in requirements under the AODA. The third Joint Multi-Year Accessibility Plan will be released in early 2022, detailing the progress made in the last 5 years, goals set for the next 5 years, and timelines for completion.

This Status Report includes the accessibility initiatives that were completed in 2021 to implement the strategy outlined in our Joint Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2016-2021.

Compliance Reporting

Middlesex County and its Local Municipal Partners filed Accessibility Compliance Reports in 2021 with the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility.

Middlesex County's Commitment Statement

Middlesex County's statement of commitment establishes the vision and goals for the County to meet the legislated accessibility requirements. The County's statement of commitment is publicly available on the County website.

Middlesex County is committed to being responsive to the needs of all its residents and employees. In order to meet the needs of people with disabilities the County will:

- Ensure policies, practices and procedures address dignity, independence, integration and provide for equal opportunity for people with disabilities.
- Allow people with disabilities to use their own personal assistive devices to obtain, use or benefit from the services offered by the County.
- Accommodate the accessibility needs of people with disabilities to ensure they can obtain, use or benefit from the County's goods, services, programs and facilities.
- Communicate with people with disabilities in a manner that takes into account the person's disability.

The County will promote accessibility by ensuring that compliance is met for all regulations made under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005. Timelines for compliance vary. In order to ensure that timelines are met, the County will establish, implement and maintain a joint Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. The plan will outline our strategy to identify, prevent and remove barriers to people with disabilities. The new plan will act as a roadmap for the next 5 years with regards to accessibility.

Continuous Achievements in Accessibility

The County and LMPs focus on removing barriers which may exist in our buildings and facilities, while ensuring that new buildings, leases, and renovations do not create any new barriers

- Middlesex County's Accessibility Policy was updated in 2016, outlining what the County has done to comply with the 2016 Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulations and what our customers and employees can expect as we move forward
  - Local Municipal Partners also made revisions to their accessibility policies to ensure compliance with the IASR and AODA
- Middlesex County Accessibility Advisory Committee continues to meet and review accessibility initiatives while representing all Local Municipal Partners across the county
- The County and LMPs continue to comply with the requirements of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation including continuing to train staff, volunteers and third parties who interact on behalf of the County on an ongoing basis
- All library branches continue to provide accessible materials and communication supports upon request
  - In addition, the library has several accessible materials and resources available including but not limited to: large print books, audio books, Centre for Equitable Library Access (CELA) Library loan access, and accessible computer workstations at the Strathroy, Lucan, Dorchester and Parkhill Library Branches. (Accessible Workstation includes: ZoomText with high-contrast, large print keyboard; Dragon Naturally Speaking and joystick mouse)
- The County and LMPs have policies in place to ensure the public is notified of accommodations for applicants with disabilities in its recruitment process and hiring process
- Continue to review customer feedback and take appropriate action
- The County and its Local Municipal Partners are continuously identifying opportunities to improve accessibility to municipal services and implement improvements throughout the Township
- The County and LMPs routinely identify funding opportunities to improve accessibility and inclusion

Highlights of 2021

Enabling Accessibility Fund (Federal grant opportunity for funding up to $100,000) application support provided to multiple Local Municipal Partners

- o Successful in securing funding working with the Municipality of North Middlesex to make significant accessibility upgrades to the Ailsa Craig Community Centre

- o Ailsa Craig Community Centre accessibility upgrades completed in 2021

- Ministry for Seniors & Accessibility Compliance reports submitted by Middlesex County and all Local Municipal Partners in 2021

  - o Compliance claimed for many LMPs including web accessibility

- Middlesex Accessibility Advisory Committee provided consultation on and/or reviewed the following accessibility projects:

  - o Ilderton Library Outdoor Play Space

  - o Thorndale Library Outdoor Play Space

  - o Dorchester Accessible and Inclusive Playground and RFI

  - o Ailsa Craig Community Centre accessibility upgrades

  - o Middlesex Centre Age Friendly Community Action Plan

- Website upgrades completed on following LMPs websites to ensure compliance with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA requirements:

  - o Municipality of North Middlesex

  - o Municipality of Middlesex Centre

  - o Township of Lucan Biddulph

  - o Economic Development Middlesex County

  - o Municipality of Thames Centre

  - o Municipality of Southwest Middlesex

  - o Township of Adelaide Metcalfe

  - o Middlesex County Library

- The Township of Adelaide Metcalfe was awarded an Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP) – COVID-19 Resiliency Stream Grant to rehabilitate Kerwood Park in Kerwood, Ontario

  - o The rehabilitation of the park included the installation of accessible, barrier-free washrooms

- The Township of Adelaide Metcalfe has continued to provide accessibility for residents through ongoing development and expansion of our sidewalk network

- The Municipality of Lucan Biddulph completed the following accessibility initiatives in 2021:
    - Installed new play structures with increased accessibility/transfer stations that also includes sensory activities at Granton Park & Lucan Biddulph Community Memorial Centre
    - AODA Compliant Notice Templates for public planning meetings
    - Provided AODA Legislation –Customer Service Training refresher for all staff and training for new hires
    - Provided online live and recorded streaming of Council and Committee Meetings through YouTube as well as provided additional opportunities for participation of the public at Council/Committee meetings being held virtually
    - Established online based building permit application system to create additional delivery of services
    - Installed additional directional signage for significant attractions/locations in Lucan

- The Municipality of Middlesex Centre completed the following accessibility initiatives in 2021:
    - Off Street Parking Renovations - Douglas B. Weldon Park, Delaware Community Centre and Ilderton Arena
    - Renovation of Play Structures (Denfield Park)
    - Removal of non-standard Sidewalk and replacement with AODA compliant sidewalk
    - Expansion of sidewalk network, creating connections to trails and other sidewalk facilities completing missing links
    - Review of Rick Hansen Designation App (Ilderton Library/Komoka Wellness Centre)
    - Installation of accessible washrooms at Douglas B. Weldon Park
    - Creation of a Municipal Diversity and Inclusion Policy (Draft Stage)
    - Creation of an Age Friendly Community Action Plan (Draft Stage)
    - AODA Compliant Notice Templates for public planning meetings

- o Delivery of services through electronic and remote means, including an online based building permit application and review system (CloudPermit)
- o Ongoing enhancements to electronic Council meetings, including expanded opportunities for public input and participation, both via phone and electronic participation
    - ▪ Increased information sharing regarding Council decisions through the implementation of a Meeting Highlights document to complement existing information sharing
- o Provided AODA Legislation –Customer Service Training for all staff / new hires / others identified in legislation
    - ▪ Training was also required and provided for suppliers incorporated into all procurement processes
- o Completion of AODA Compliance Audit in 2020-2021
    - ▪ Compliance was achieved

- The Municipality of North Middlesex Completed the following accessibility projects in 2021:
    - o Offsite public parking lot on Mill Street Parkhill with appropriate signage and marked parking spaces
    - o Completion of the accessibility upgrades to the washrooms at the Ailsa Craig Community Centre
    - o Assistive Hearing Devices available for public use – Council Chambers 229 Parkhill Main Street
    - o Redesign of the splashpad located in Coronation Park, Parkhill
    - o Delivery of services through electronic and remote means, including an online based building permit application and review system (CloudPermit)
    - o Ongoing enhancements to electronic Council meetings, including expanded opportunities for public input and participation, both via phone and electronic participation

- The Municipality of Thames Centre completed the following accessibility initiatives in 2021:
    - o Increased service delivery methods through electronic means (accepting applications through email, using DocuSign to sign 3rd party agreements, etc.) while still maintaining original processes to serve the public when needed

- o Increased awareness of methods such as the municipal drop box during COVID
- o Continue to coordinate livestreamed electronic council and committee meetings
- o Continuously improving methods to make electronic meetings easily accessible to the public – through usage of an efficient automatic registration system and providing support when needed (training sessions for those new to Zoom, accommodating citizens with poor internet connectivity, etc.)
- o On-going training is provided to staff on creating accessible documents Feedback Process
- o Installed new barrier-free automatic sliding door in place of standard swing doors between lobby and north ice pad at FlightExec Centre.
- o Installed new playground structure at Thorndale Park, complete with accessible features
- o Installed phase 1 of walking path lights at Dorchester Park
    - ▪ New Accessible Playground planning began in 2021
- o Built new Fieldhouse at Thorndale Park, complete with barrier-free family washroom
- o Completed new Community Centre in Thorndale, to AODA compliance
- o Hired professional playground inspector to audit half of our playgrounds (with other half being budgeted for next year)
- o Installed new microphone system in Council Chambers to enhance audio for those in live attendance at meetings as well as for those listening remotely on-line
    - ▪ Includes voice amplification and improved acoustics as well as video components
- o Added 10 new benches outside of facilities and along walking trails various locations across the municipality
- o Replaced 6 picnic tables with new wheelchair accessible picnic tables at various locations across the municipality
- o Municipal App – providing municipal information and services in a convenient, easy to use format – this app won the E.A. Danby award from AMCTO
- The Municipality of Southwest Middlesex achieved the following Accessibility initiatives in 2021:
    - o Continued to support Human Resources with HR Downloads to include legislative changes and best practices
    - o Website updates to maintain compliance with the WCAG 2.0 Level AA

- o Revised Council reports, minutes and by-law templates and redesigned these documents to ensure accessibility when posted to the website
  - o Introduced a website enhancement platform for accessibility compliance
  - o Made accessible updates to the Glencoe Library and Glencoe Daycare
  - o Began working on accessibility updates at the Glencoe Arena and Appin Play Equipment
- The Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc achieved the following accessibility initiatives in 2021:
  - o Redesigned and relaunched the Police Services website to ensure it is in compliance with the WCAG 2.0 Level AA requirements
  - o Implemented Closed Captioning for live and archived Council and Committee meetings through e-Scribe
  - o Ensured PDF documents meet accessibility requirements prior to uploading them onto the website (ongoing)
  - o Provided AODA training through HR Downloads
  - o Caradoc Street reconstruction
  - o Updated design standards in October 2021 to include accessibility requirements under the IASR and AODA, and to incorporate language that outlines the requirements for the built environment design of public space
  - o Installation of new playgrounds at the following locations:
    - ▪ South Creek
    - ▪ Alexandra Park
    - ▪ Fairground Recreation Complex
- Village of Newbury launched a new website in November 2021 to ensure it meets the compliance requirements under the WCAG 2.0 Level AA

Availability of the Plan and Status Report

The Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and Annual Accessibility Status Reports can be accessed through Middlesex County's website: Middlesex County Accessibility Page.

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Accessible formats and/or communication supports available upon request.