

IMPROVING CALGARY'S ACCESSIBILITY: UPDATE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2015 July, Council directed Administration, in conjunction with the Advisory Committee on Accessibility (ACA), to review the accessibility of the Municipal Complex and report back to Council on actions and costs to ensure that the Complex meets current City accessibility standards. Council also directed Administration to audit the accessibility of the remainder of The City of Calgary civic facilities.

In response to this direction, Facility Management (FM) managed a detailed audit of the Municipal Complex in consultation with partner business units and the Calgary Parking Authority to ensure compliance with updated Access Design Standards (ADS) 2016 and the 2014 Alberta Building Code (ABC 2014). The audit identified conditions that do not meet ADS 2016 standards, a ranking of projects based on impact and complexity, and where possible, associated costs (see Attachment 1 for a summary).

The audit report enables the strategic incorporation of accessibility enhancements into planned lifecycle and renovation projects. FM, in partnership with other business units, began work immediately on sixteen of the barriers identified in the report to improve access and safety for visitors to the Municipal Complex (see Attachment 2).

In response to Council direction to audit the accessibility of the remainder of The City of Calgary civic facilities, an accessibility audit strategy has been developed to prioritize the assessment of the remainder of civic facilities. FM will use the strategy in consultation with partner business units to audit civic facilities.

ADMINISTRATION RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Land and Asset Strategy Committee recommends that Council:

1. Receive this report for information; and
2. Endorse the accessibility audit strategy developed for the Municipal Complex as the standard process for auditing other City of Calgary civic facilities.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL DIRECTION / POLICY

In 2005 December, Council adopted the Calgary Corporate Accessibility Policy (CSPS003).

In 2006 November, Council adopted the Fair Calgary Policy (CSPS019).

In 2015 July, Council adopted Notice of Motion 2015-16 directing Administration, in consultation with the Advisory Committee on Accessibility, to:

- a) Review and assess the accessibility of the Municipal Complex and report back to Council on actions and costs to ensure that the Complex meets current City accessibility standards; and
- b) Assess the accessibility of the remainder of The City of Calgary civic facilities.

In 2016 September, Council adopted the updated ADS 2016, effective 2017 April 01.

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BACKGROUND

The Municipal Complex – comprised of Calgary's Historic City Hall, the Municipal Building and the Administration Building – houses 2,500 employees as well as public space. The buildings range in age from 30-100 years old with different levels of accessibility.

Each building was built to meet the accessibility standards in place at the time they were constructed. A number of initiatives to improve the accessibility of the Municipal Complex have been undertaken in recent years. These include improved accessibility to the Municipal Complex at the north entrance by the LRT station, assisted listening devices and captioning for Council sessions, improved seating options in Council Chambers and committee rooms, upgraded signage, and stair nosing to assist the visually impaired. To date, accessibility within the Municipal Complex has been addressed on an as needed basis.

The City seeks opportunities to improve accessibility when possible on all projects as a matter of best practice. The City has a number of upgrades and redesign plans for the Municipal Complex which provides opportunities to further improve accessibility. By identifying and prioritizing accessibility needs, high impact improvements can be completed in conjunction with planned lifecycle and other work in the Municipal Complex.

INVESTIGATION: ALTERNATIVES AND ANALYSIS

Municipal Complex Accessibility Audit

Following consultation with The Accommodation Infrastructure Steering Committee (AISC), a project team was struck with representation from eight business units and Calgary Parking Authority. A series of five internal project team meetings, led by accessibility consultants, were conducted throughout 2016 March – June. The AISC, Advisory Committee on Accessibility (ACA) and Ward Councillor's Office received progress update presentations in 2016, June.

The accessibility consultants were tasked with undertaking an audit of the Municipal Complex to include a description of accessibility deficiencies, priorities based on complexity and impact, and associated costs. The 2014 Alberta Building Code (ABC 2014) and Access Design Standards (ADS) 2016 were the two standards used to assess the Municipal Complex. The review included visual reviews conducted through a series of tours. For items found not to be in compliance with the ADS 2016, a further comparison was made to determine compliance with the ABC 2014 with a primary focus on Section 3.8 barrier-free requirements. See Attachment 3 for the template used to document findings.

The scope of the review was comprehensive – from the curb through to the interior including the publicly-accessible portions of The Municipal Building, The Administration Building, CPA Parkade No 36, and the public pedestrian realm to the road curbs surrounding the complex. Historic City Hall was excluded from the review due to the rehabilitation of the building exterior including the reconstruction of its primary entrances. A review of exterior accessibility was included in the scope of the consultants already performing that work. An accessibility audit of the interior of Historic City Hall will be a priority with the future audits of remaining civic facilities.

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It is not the intent of either the 2014 Alberta Building Code or the Access Design Standards 2016 to be used to enforce the retroactive application of new requirements to existing buildings. When developing recommendations, the consultant team considered the complexity levels as well as the intent of the requirements in an effort to increase accessibility while still remaining fiscally responsible.

Three categories of inaccessible conditions are identified in the report:

- 1) High Impact/Low Complexity - Conditions which require insignificant cost and/or operational change to improve accessibility for a broad group of building users. These conditions are in the process of being remedied.
- 2) High Impact/Moderate to High Complexity - Conditions which require significant cost and/or operational change to improve accessibility for a broad group of building users. These conditions should be remedied at such time as a building renovation or alteration requiring code upgrades is performed.
- 3) Low Impact/Moderate to High Complexity - Conditions which require excessive cost and/or operational change to improve accessibility for only a specific group of building users. Where fiscally reasonable and lifecycle or renovation work is planned, these conditions will be forwarded for consideration within the next funding cycle.

A summary of report findings can be found in Attachment 1.

Results

Facility Management is currently addressing sixteen high impact/low complexity projects in collaboration with relevant business unit partners (see Attachment 2). While some of the projects are specific to individuals with vision or mobility impairments, others will benefit all users of the Municipal Complex. Replacing tree grates where openings are larger than 13 mm prevent wheelchairs and canes from getting caught in them, while also reducing tripping hazards for all pedestrians. The need to provide a service dog relieving area reflects the increased use of service dogs to support a broad range of health needs. Redistributing the parking stalls in lot 36 so that users are not required to pass behind other parked vehicles enhances the safety for all users of handicap stalls, including those in wheelchairs. The high impact/low complexity accessibility upgrades will benefit a broad range of Municipal Complex users.

Going forward, the prioritized list of accessibility upgrades allows Administration to leverage facility lifecycle and maintenance work as it is planned, in order to address some of the intermediate and challenging upgrades. The next key future project impacting the Municipal Complex will be the redesign of Olympic Plaza and integration into the Municipal Plaza. This will provide an opportunity to address some of the more complex accessibility upgrades identified in the report. Of highest priority are ramps in the Municipal Complex that do not meet ADS 2016 standards.

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Accessibility Audit Strategy for City of Calgary Civic Facilities

Through Notice of Motion 2015-16, Administration was tasked with “accessing the accessibility of the remainder of The City of Calgary civic facilities”. Using the Municipal Complex audit report as a guide, and with the expertise of partners at the table, the project team developed an accessibility audit strategy for City of Calgary civic facilities (see Attachment 4). Guiding principles were established to determine facilities of key importance for an audit. Priorities are based on complexity and impact. Facility Management (FM) will use the strategy in consultation with partner business units to audit civic facilities.

Next Steps

FM will steward the Corporate audit of civic facilities. The goal is for accessibility upgrades to be embedded in facility planning and development across the Corporation as a matter of practice. Several business units have already incorporated accessibility assessments as a regular part of their facility development and upgrades:

- Calgary Recreation has a long-term accessibility strategy for their facilities which informed the work of the consultants. The strategy that provides direction for improving the accessibility of their facilities is a result of the *Recreation Accessibility Study* (July 2015 to June 2016); in which site visits were conducted at 45 City-operated facilities, including (11) aquatic and fitness centres, (2) leisure centres, (2) arts centres, (6) golf courses, (12) arenas, (11) athletic parks and (1) sailing school. Each facility site visit included an assessment of the measures from an Accessibility Checklist developed to evaluate the path of travel experience of users throughout the recreation facility and the use of its amenities.
- Parks has undertaken a Pathway Washroom Inventory.
- Transit has audited all LRT stations and platforms for accessibility.
- The Pedestrian Strategy, approved in 2016, includes the Sidewalk Missing Links program with a prioritization process to address deficiencies in the sidewalk network. Completing the sidewalk and pathway network, including to civic spaces and public transit, represents a city-wide approach to enhanced accessibility for Calgarians.

Administration will continue to seek efficiencies through planned lifecycle and renovation projects. Any further funding requirements for projects identified as moderate to high impact complexity will be incorporated into Action Plan 2.

To address the need for better cross-corporate coordination Administration will:

- Work with the project team to continue the cross-corporate approach undertaken to address the Council motion.
- Continue to compile a comprehensive inventory of all current initiatives and utilize best practice examples as a benchmark for corporate initiatives.
- Build on the learnings from this project to develop a corporate coordination strategy for a better approach to aligning the various initiatives and increasing the overall impact of these efforts.

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Stakeholder Engagement, Research and Communication

The Advisory Committee on Accessibility, Ward 7 and senior management through the Accommodation Infrastructure Steering Committee were engaged throughout the project. Eight business units as well as the Calgary Parking Authority collaborated on the audit of the Municipal Complex and the accessibility audit strategy to inform Corporate accessibility initiatives going forward. Attachment 5 summarizes the engagement process and participants.

Strategic Alignment

The recommendations in this report are in strategic alignment with the Corporate Accessibility Policy and Council's priorities to be "a prosperous city" by helping ensure that there is opportunity for all, to be "a city of inspiring neighbourhoods" by allowing all Calgarians the opportunity to participate in civic life, and to be "a city that moves" by facilitating the safe movement of people.

This report also aligns with Action Plan 2015-2018, CSPA P12.1, "Steward relevant ... strategies that address the needs of vulnerable populations including ... persons with disabilities."

Social, Environmental, Economic (External)

Upgrades to the Municipal Complex and other civic facilities stewarded by Facility Management (FM) will ensure all citizens have access to participate in civic processes and administrative services, and will comply with universal accessibility guidelines. This approach represents best practice for Canadian municipalities across the country.

By identifying and prioritizing projects in advance, accessibility projects can be incorporated into planned lifecycle and construction projects to reduce costs and service interruptions.

Financial Capacity

Current and Future Operating Budget:

Key 2017 and 2018 work for the Municipal Complex and other civic facilities will be addressed using internal efficiencies through the ongoing FM review of services and continuous improvement process along with existing facility lifecycle and maintenance work already planned and underway. High impact, moderate to high complexity priority projects may require funding from the 2018 budget.

Current and Future Capital Budget:

Capital budget requirements will be addressed using the same process as operating budget requirements noted above.

Risk Assessment

The work done to prepare this report, and the future work recommended in the report, help mitigate the health and safety risks to the public who use The Municipal Complex.

Taking measures to make The Municipal Complex accessible beyond code requirements reduces reputational risk, and demonstrates The City of Calgary's leadership in this area.

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REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION(S):

The recommendations are consistent with Council's previous direction, they support three of Council's priorities, and they are in alignment with the Calgary Corporate Accessibility Policy.

ATTACHMENT(S)

1. Class 5 Cost Allowance to Retrofit the Municipal Complex to 2016 ADS Standards
2. Municipal Complex Audit: High Impact/Low Complexity Priority Projects
3. Municipal Complex Audit Template
4. Accessibility Audit Strategy
5. Stakeholder Engagement