



# Accessibility Plan: 2025 Update

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# 1 Background

In 2023 the Town of Antigonish published its first Accessibility Plan. Barriers to accessibility were assessed throughout the Town and a list of actions was created to support the removal of these barriers. The implementation of our Accessibility Plan was put on hold, along with other strategic plans, as the Town of Antigonish and the Municipality of the County of Antigonish explored consolidation into one municipal unit. Through this time many long-term issues important to residents were deferred until the future of the municipalities were decided

Since the decision not to consolidate was made the Town has restarted implementing the original 2023 Accessibility Plan. We recognize that more action is needed to truly advance accessibility in Antigonish. To support this, we engaged in a process to update and refresh the Plan's actions that address the needs of residents in our community. To support an update on the Plan's progress we retained the accessibility consulting firm, Left Turn Right Turn (LTRT) to support the Plan review and update process. The following sections outline the findings of this process.

## 2 What We Heard: Community Consultations

### 2.1 Background

As part of the progress evaluation, we worked with an external consultant to carry out community consultations about the state of accessibility in Antigonish. The purpose of these engagements was to gather feedback about accessibility from residents and stakeholders in Antigonish.

These activities included two pop-up style community engagements at the Antigonish Farmer's Market and The People's Place, the Pictou-Antigonish Regional Library. LTRT staff facilitated an online drop in consultation for community members. Both the pop-ups and the online consultation were held in late February 2025. We also presented the original plan to the Town's Accessibility Advisory Committee for feedback on our progress in early March 2025. People were asked about the current state of accessibility in Antigonish, what they thought of the original plan's actions, what has been going well, and what we could improve on going forward.

## 2.2 Feedback Summary

Overall, community members had a low level of awareness about the existence of our 2023 Accessibility Plan. It is likely that the Town's consolidation review process with the County may have decreased visibility of the Accessibility Plan. Some community members, including members of our Accessibility Advisory Committee, noted that the timelines for certain actions were too long and should be shortened. Many community members were happy to see accessibility in Antigonish getting a specific focus in community outreach and engagement activities. This feedback showed us that we have room to improve how we communicate with residents about accessibility and ensuring that we communicate all information in accessible formats.

We received a lot of feedback about barriers to accessibility in the Town's public spaces and infrastructure. We received positive feedback about the accessibility improvements made to The Sandlot Ballfield and how these improvements have helped more people access the outdoors in our community. We heard specifically that some intersections presented barriers for people with various disabilities due to cracked or heaving sidewalks, the absence of curb cuts and tactile walking surface indicators, and traffic signals without accessibility features like audible chirps. We also received feedback about accessible seating options around the Town and in Town parks and recreation facilities. Some residents shared they were happy to see and use accessible picnic tables in certain parks, but others highlighted the need for more seating overall in Antigonish, and specifically in the downtown area.

Residents shared that the lack of public transportation options in Antigonish create significant barriers for people with disabilities and that the private and non-profit options do not adequately meet the needs of residents. We also received a lot of feedback about the availability of accessible parking spaces in Antigonish. Many residents felt there aren't enough spaces available and the ones that are can often be blocked by vehicles using the space without a permit. Some people commented that parking kiosks have not been installed at accessible heights and there were also questions about the level of monitoring to prevent misuse of the spots by those without a permit. Another issue identified was the lack of

consistent design standards resulting in some spaces being inaccessible due to other street infrastructure, like fire hydrants or utility poles, being in the way.

People we engaged with felt that, overall, accessibility needs to be much more highly prioritized in Antigonish but are willing to recognize when advancements have been achieved. We are grateful to all the community members who took the time to share their feedback and lived experience with us.

### 3 Progress Made to Date

#### 3.1 Overview

As a result of the feedback we received from members of our community and insights provided by Town staff and our Accessibility Advisory Committee, we will continue to implement the actions in our 2023 plan. We have not added any new actions to the Plan at this time. We recognize that having an implementation timeline is critical to our accessibility efforts and we have made designating timelines for each action item our first priority going forward.

#### 3.2 Awareness and Education

<b>Action</b>	<b>Progress</b>
<b>Provide training to public-facing Town staff and Town Council</b>	<b>In progress.</b>
<b>Establish a public education campaign</b>	<b>In progress.</b> This is hopefully set to start with the approval of this update, and as we communicate our 2025-2026 capital budget.
<b>Review the role and administration of the Accessibility Committee</b>	<b>Complete.</b> The Advisory Committee policy was reviewed and approved by Council in February 2025.
<b>Communicate reasoning and benefits for accessibility improvements as they happen</b>	<b>In progress.</b> We post on social media when we proceed on accessible initiatives for example: Installation of

	tactile walking surface indicators on our Active Transportation Trail.
<b>Encourage and support the participation of people with disabilities throughout Town Committees and Boards</b>	<b>In progress.</b>  We are currently recruiting members from diverse communities for Town Committees including the Accessibility Advisory Committee. A number of applications have been received, and they will be reviewed by a Nomination Committee in April.
<b>Establish clear staff responsibilities for an Accessibility Coordinator position or designate.</b>	<b>In progress.</b>  Having an accessible lens for Town operations and projects will be the responsibility of the Chief Administrative Officers and the Directors.
<b>Explore Opportunities to fund accessible equipment.</b>	<b>Ongoing</b>  We will be cost-sharing the purchase of an accessible picnic table for the Mini-Pitch facility and will continue to work with community partners to identify other equipment needed.

### 3.3 Goods and Services

<b>Action</b>	<b>Progress</b>
<b>Ensure accessibility of Town meetings and events.</b>	<b>In progress.</b>  We are looking into options for livestreaming Council meetings.
<b>Ensure Town programming has supports available for participants with disabilities</b>	<b>Ongoing</b>  We do this on an as needed basis every year. We bring in additional staff to support program participants one-on-one. All our student leaders are enrolled in High-5 and other training programs.
<b>Support expanded sensory-friendly programs.</b>	<b>Not started.</b>

<b>Provide additional programming for seniors in the community.</b>	<b>Complete.</b> Our Recreation division offered a new program this year that has been highly successful. Learn more here: <a href="https://townofantigonish.ca/new-fitness-program-launched-for-older-adults-moving-mingling.html">https://townofantigonish.ca/new-fitness-program-launched-for-older-adults-moving-mingling.html</a>
<b>Continue to provide funding opportunities for organizations offering essential services.</b>	<b>Ongoing</b>  The Town provides annual funding through Community Grants for non-profit organizations like Antigonish Challenger Baseball.
<b>Support new mental health services within the Town.</b>	<b>Not started.</b>
<b>Establish accessibility and inclusion criteria for funding programs.</b>	<b>Not started.</b>
<b>Expand free equipment loan program</b>	<b>In progress.</b>  The Active Living Coordinator has been buying new equipment for the loan program this year including sensory kits.
<b>Update Winter Maintenance Strategy</b>	<b>In progress.</b>  Council and staff are currently working on a new policy for snow removal in the downtown core and at accessible parking spaces.

### 3.4 Communications

<b>Action</b>	<b>Progress</b>
<b>Improve the consistency of communications around Town Council, Boards, and Committees.</b>	<b>In progress.</b>  As part of our Advisory Committee policy update we will be looking at how to better communicate upcoming council and committee meetings with the public. Council has also asked staff to prepare a policy for live-streaming council meetings and determine a budget for equipment

	<p>and necessary upgrades to Town Council chambers.</p> <p>We have added a new section to the homepage of the Town’s website that clearly lists upcoming council and committee meetings.</p>
<b>Ensure all Town communications are easy to read.</b>	<p><b>In progress.</b></p> <p>Communications staff have taken part in plain-language and accessibility workshops. Guidelines have been created for making accessible social media posts and are awaiting approval for use. All communications are written with plain language in mind.</p>
<b>Provide alternate formats of Town resources on request.</b>	<b>Not started.</b>
<b>Share all information in multiple formats.</b>	<p><b>In progress.</b></p> <p>While we do share information in multiple formats, we know we aren’t consistent in this practice. We will be exploring creating a checklist or guidance document about accessible formats and best practices to help us improve our consistency.</p>
<b>Integrate Alternative formats of online documents</b>	<b>Not started.</b>
<b>Ensure the Town website is compliant with web accessibility standards.</b>	<b>Not started.</b>
<b>Provide accessible captions for all social media posts.</b>	<p><b>In progress.</b></p> <p>Staff have created accessibility guidelines for social media posts; however it does need to be implemented.</p>
<b>Provide alternative communication technologies in all Town buildings.</b>	<p><b>In progress.</b></p> <p>We are working on a redesign of the first floor of our town hall that includes considerations for</p>

	accessibility upgrades such as visual alarms, tactile signage, and hearing loops.
<b>Improve the acoustics of Town meeting spaces.</b>	<b>In progress.</b>  This will be done in conjunction with the redesign of Town Hall.
<b>Host inclusive and creative community engagement</b>	<b>In progress.</b>  We feel our community engagement practices are inclusive, but we know there is always room for improvement. We commit to researching inclusive community engagement best practices and implementing them where possible.

### 3.5 Employment

<b>Action</b>	<b>Progress</b>
<b>Commit to becoming an accessible workplace</b>	<b>In progress.</b>
<b>Update accessibility policies and information within employment documents.</b>	<b>Not started.</b> We are working to build our capacity to tackle this action.
<b>Support the importance of town halls with local employers.</b>	<b>Not started.</b>
<b>Develop resources for employers looking to improve accessibility.</b>	<b>Not started.</b>
<b>Support the development of a local accessibility trade network.</b>	<b>Not started.</b>
<b>Continue to support local employment services</b>	<b>Not started.</b>
<b>Establish inclusive hiring practices.</b>	<b>Not started.</b>

### 3.6 The Built Environment

<b>Action</b>	<b>Progress</b>
<b>Continue to enforce Town Regulations and the Nova Scotia Building Code</b>	<b>Ongoing</b>
<b>Establish a maintenance schedule for accessible features.</b>	<b>Not started</b>
<b>Continue to improve accessibility of all Town facilities.</b>	<b>Not started.</b>  We are working on a request for proposals for a renovation of our Town Hall that will include updated accessibility features.
<b>Design all spaces to recommended dimensions</b>	<b>Not started.</b>  We are working on a request for proposals for a renovation of our Town Hall that will include updated accessibility features.
<b>Review evacuation plans for all town-owned buildings</b>	<b>In progress.</b>  We completed a review of our Town Hall’s evacuation plans for accessibility and are working towards reviewing other building evacuation plans.
<b>Allow and promote accessible ramps.</b>	<b>In progress.</b>
<b>Advocate for and support accessibility improvements within key sites not owned by the Town.</b>	In progress.  We are working with the Eastern District Planning Commission to address accessibility improvements on an ongoing basis.
<b>Establish incentives for accessible development and retrofits</b>	<b>In progress.</b>
<b>Undertake Accessible Antigonish recommendations.</b>	<b>In progress.</b>
<b>Improve the Accessibility of Columbus Field.</b>	<b>Not started.</b>
<b>Complete upgrades to Central Field and the Sandlot</b>	<b>In progress.</b>

	In 2024, we added an accessible pathway from the parking lot to the Sandlot Field. In 2025, this pathway will be extended to the Central Field.
<b>Provide accessible play spaces.</b>	<b>In progress.</b>  In 2024, we added an accessible pathway from the parking lot to the Sandlot Field. In 2025, this pathway will be extended to the Central Field. We have also partnered with the County on a new mini-pitch facility that is a sport tile surface that is accessible. This facility will have a grand opening in 2025.
<b>Post directional signage at all Town-owned buildings to assist with navigation.</b>	<b>In progress.</b>  This is a consideration in our RFP for the Town Hall renovation.
<b>Ensure outdoor lighting is adequate and consistent.</b>	<b>In progress.</b>
<b>Enable diverse housing options.</b>	<b>In progress.</b>  The Town, in partnership with the County, has hired a Housing Accelerator Fund Coordinator, to remove barriers and encourage local initiatives to build more homes faster, to increase the housing supply, and to support more affordable, diverse, and climate-resilient development.
<b>Enable supportive housing throughout all residential zones.</b>	<b>In progress.</b>  As part of the Housing Accelerator Fund initiative, our Coordinator is reviewing the Town's Municipal Planning Strategy.

### 3.7 Transportation

<b>Action</b>	<b>Progress</b>
<b>Apply traffic calming on residential streets.</b>	<b>In progress.</b>  This action is under review for budget considerations.

<p><b>Create a clear path of travel on all sidewalks.</b></p>	<p><b>In progress.</b></p> <p>This action is under review for budget considerations as sidewalk maintenance is an ongoing expense.</p>
<p><b>Ensure accessible pedestrian signals and clear path of travel at crosswalks</b></p>	<p><b>In progress.</b></p> <p>Equipment and infrastructure upgrades are considered as part of our capital upgrades process.</p>
<p><b>Expand the Town’s sidewalk network</b></p>	<p><b>In progress.</b></p> <p>The Town’s Active Transportation Trail project includes new pathways/sidewalks that are accessible. The first phase of four has been completed. For more information:  <a href="https://townofantigonish.ca/active-transportation-trail.html">https://townofantigonish.ca/active-transportation-trail.html</a>.</p>
<p><b>Regulate construction zones and patios to limit pedestrian disruptions.</b></p>	<p><b>Not started.</b></p>
<p><b>Make accessibility improvements to the Landing Trail.</b></p>	<p><b>In progress.</b></p> <p>The Landing Trail is in an area next to a river (also known as a flood plain) which makes paving a challenge. We are considering other options to improve accessibility such as signage at this location.</p>
<p><b>Integrate Vision Zero principles into road design</b></p>	<p><b>In progress.</b></p> <p>Staff can begin working on the integration of Vision Zero principles at the direction of Town Council.</p>
<p><b>Provide seating and amenities within public spaces.</b></p>	<p><b>In progress.</b></p> <p>The extension of the pathway at the Central Field will include a paved viewing area next to the bleachers.</p>
<p><b>Provide year-round universal public washroom access.</b></p>	<p><b>Not started.</b></p> <p>Our focus for washroom improvements is on existing facilities.</p>

<b>Continue to assist in funding local transit providers.</b>	<b>In progress.</b>  We have been financially supporting the Antigonish Community Transit from its inception.
<b>Continue engagement with the taxi industry to share community concerns.</b>	<b>In progress.</b>  We have a Taxicab By-Law and By-Law Officers are in regular contact with drivers. We partner with the RCMP to assist with enforcement and community concerns can be brought forward to the Town's Police & Licensing Committee.
<b>Improve the physical accessibility of parking lots.</b>	<b>In progress.</b>
<b>Complete a parking review.</b>	<b>Not started.</b>  A review of municipal parking facilities was started prior to the COVID-19 pandemic but this review was not completed.  In the 2025-2026 capital budget, there is a request for two new parking kiosks; one to replace a kiosk that is not accessible, and another to replace parking meters in the Town's largest parking lot in the downtown core.

## 4 Monitoring our Progress

We understand that our accessibility journey does not end with the publication of this updated accessibility plan, and to make lasting change in Antigonish we will need to monitor and regularly report on the progress of accessibility initiatives. To support this and to provide greater transparency and accountability to the Antigonish community we have committed to presenting a yearly report to the Accessibility Advisory Committee on our progress.