



**RESORT MUNICIPALITY OF WHISTLER**

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## STAFF REPORT TO COUNCIL

**PRESENTED:** September 6, 2022 **REPORT:** 22-120  
**FROM:** Planning – Policy **FILE:** 7082.01  
**SUBJECT:** WHISTLER ACCESSIBILITY ACTION PLAN – FINAL REPORT

### RECOMMENDATION FROM THE CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

**That** the recommendation of the General Manager of Resort Experience be endorsed.

### RECOMMENDATION(S)

**That** Council receive the final Whistler Accessibility Action Plan, attached as Appendix A to Administrative Report to Council No. 22-120 (Whistler Accessibility Action Plan); and

**That** Council direct staff to update the Whistler Accessibility Action Plan within three years as per the future requirements of the *Accessible British Columbia Act*, and

**That** Council direct staff to prepare an annual progress report on the implementation status of the actions identified in section three of the Whistler Accessibility Action Plan; and further

**That** Council endorse the following commitment statement within the Whistler Accessibility Action Plan:

*The Resort Municipality of Whistler is committed to working inclusively and collaboratively to provide equitable treatment to people with disabilities regarding the use and benefit of municipal services, programs, employment, goods and facilities in a manner that respects their dignity and that is equitable in relation to the broader public. The resort community also strives to continue to provide residents and visitors from around the world, regardless of age, ability or identity, with a seamless resort experience based not only on accessibility, but also on inclusivity. The Resort Municipality of Whistler will continue to work with the community and endeavor to allocate appropriate resources toward the identification, elimination and prevention of accessibility barriers.*

### PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to present the Whistler Accessibility Action Plan (the AAP) to Council, attached as Appendix A. The report also requests that: Council direct staff to update the AAP within three years as per the future requirements of the *Accessible British Columbia Act* (ABCA); Council direct staff to provide an annual progress report on the implementation status of the AAP; and that Council endorse the accessibility commitment statement within the AAP.

Information Report

Administrative Report (Decision or Direction)

## DISCUSSION

### Background

Everyone benefits from accessibility and inclusion. People’s abilities are in a constant state of change, whether this is recovering from a broken leg, managing age-related sensory deterioration, learning to walk, or simply dealing with the temporary inconvenience of walking with ski boots on.

The Resort Municipality of Whistler (RMOW) has an established history dedicated to reducing barriers to improve the accessibility and inclusivity of Whistler for residents and visitors from around the world. In preparation for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games, the RMOW created a commitment to accessibility and inclusion within the RMOW. Ongoing initiatives and funding related to improving accessibility in Whistler have been undertaken through RMOW work programs, capital projects and working with stakeholders through the Accessibility and Inclusion Committee (AIC). Proposed developments are also assessed for accessibility considerations and the application of BC Building Code (BCBC) requirements. In 2025, Whistler will be hosting the Invictus Games, bringing together over 500 competitors from 20 nations to compete in adaptive sports. A complete list of past and ongoing Whistler accessibility initiatives and projects is included in Appendix A of the AAP.

On February 4, 2020, Council received [Administrative Report No. 20-012](#) and passed a resolution to endorse the proposed approach, work plan, project team and timeline for creating a comprehensive Accessibility Policy for the RMOW that considers concepts and standards reflected in universal design, the BCBC, the Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification (RHFAC) program and the *Accessible Canada Act* (ACA). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the original completion timeline for this project was delayed.

The ABCA was enacted in June 2021. Initially the accessibility planning requirements will apply only to provincial government organizations. The *Accessible British Columbia Regulation* under the ABCA came into force on September 1, 2022. These regulations identify municipalities as accessible organizations. As accessible organizations, municipalities will be required to have the following by September 1, 2023, which are further described in Section 1 of the AAP: 1) an accessibility committee; 2) an accessibility plan; and 3) a tool to receive feedback on accessibility.

### Analysis

The AAP’s purpose is to provide actions that identify, remove and prevent barriers to individuals in or interacting with the RMOW. While the initial Administrative Report No. 20-012 described the project as an “accessibility policy”, given the future ABCA requirements, this project was adjusted to create an “accessibility action plan”. The AAP enables the RMOW to meet the future requirements of the ABCA.

The AAP was developed based on the principles of: inclusion, adaptability, diversity, collaboration, self-determination, and universal design. The actions further the RMOW’s efforts to make its workplace, services and built environment accessible and welcoming to people of all ages and abilities. Additionally, the actions are intended to educate staff and provide them with assessment tools.

### *Report Structure*

The AAP is divided into three key sections as follows:

- Section 1 introduces the project, states the RMOW commitment to accessibility, provides definitions and outlines the framework guiding the AAP;

- Section 2 details the project’s methodology, including the initial research phase and the community engagement; and
- Section 3 presents the actions and describes implementation.

The AAP also includes six appendices that provide additional information as follows:

- Appendix A provides background information on the broader Canadian and B.C. contexts, and summarizes past and present RMOW initiatives and projects;
- Appendix B details accessibility policy in Whistler’s Official Community Plan (OCP);
- Appendix C presents a summary table of reviewed documents;
- Appendix D describes the common themes and elements revealed by the initial research;
- Appendix E details the results of the public engagement; and
- Appendix F describes the RHFAC program.

### *Overall Guiding Framework*

To organize the actions, staff looked to define focus areas that reflect the commonality in the accessibility needs of Canadians living with disabilities. To define these focus areas, staff considered the ACA seven focus areas and the ABCA standards areas. After considering RMOW functions, the ACA and the ABCA, the following AAP action areas were developed:

- Improve Inclusive Service Design and Delivery;
- Enhance Built Environment Accessibility;
- Continue Equitable Employment Practices;
- Foster Accessible Communications and Engagement;
- Reduce Transportation Barriers; and
- Support Accessible Procurement.

### *Actions and Implementation*

Overall, the AAP presents a total of 59 actions. These actions are distributed across the six AAP action areas. Additionally, there are general actions (including training and assessment schedules) that will further advance each of the six action areas.

When applicable, a “lead” is identified to champion the action. Implementing the AAP will require commitment and contributions primarily by a number of RMOW departments. Some actions will require collaboration with the Whistler Mature Action Community (MAC) and Whistler Housing Authority Ltd. (WHA).

The actions will be pursued as resources permit and as opportunities arise, and will be adjusted as new information becomes available. Some actions may require significant resources, and implementation will depend on evaluation relative to other organizational priorities and funding opportunities. Where applicable, a recommended starting date is specified in the AAP and where possible, actions should be integrated into ongoing RMOW operations and new initiatives.

Implementation progress will be reviewed by RMOW staff and reported on annually to the AIC and Council. This will inform the RMOW strategic planning and annual budgeting processes.

The AAP will be reviewed and updated at least every three years, as per the ABCA requirements. This review will include an evaluation of the most recent performance data and an assessment of current opportunities.

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## POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

### Relevant Council Authority/Previous Decisions

[February 4, 2020: Administrative Report No. 20-012](#), Development of RMOW Accessibility Policy

### Corporate Plan

The RMOW Corporate Plan is updated annually and articulates strategic direction for the organization. This section identifies how this report links to the plan.

#### Council Focus Areas

Community Balance

*Effectively **balance resort and community needs** through deliberate planning, partnerships and investment*

Climate Action

*Provide leadership to **accelerate climate action and environmental performance** across the community*

Housing

*Advance strategic and innovative initiatives to enable and **deliver additional employee housing***

Pandemic Recovery

*Leadership and support for **community and tourism recovery and sustainability** – priority focuses are where recovery needs intersect with other Council focus areas*

Not Applicable

### Community Vision and Official Community Plan

The OCP is the RMOW's most important guiding document that sets the community vision and long-term community direction. This section identifies how this report applies to the OCP.

By involving stakeholders and aiming to reduce barriers to accessibility and inclusion in Whistler, the project directly supports the vision characteristics related to inclusion, conduct and participation. These vision characteristics are as follows:

- **INCLUSIVE:** Residents and visitors of all ages, identities, abilities and incomes are welcome, included, and share our love for nature, active recreation, human connections and innovation.
- **CONDUCT:** Everyone is treated with fairness, respect and care, and as a result we enjoy high levels of mutual trust and safety.
- **PARTICIPATION:** We are able to meaningfully participate in community decisions, collaborating to achieve our Community Vision.

Additionally, the OCP has five goal statements that relate to accessibility and inclusion. These goals are as follows:

- 5.3. Promote a diversity of housing forms, tenures, residential uses and densities to support the resort community's needs.
- 8.4. Encourage and strengthen a culture of inclusion and diversity.
- 8.8. Ensure Whistler is an inclusive and accessible resort community.
- 9.5. Continue to maintain, improve and provide a diverse variety of high quality and affordable recreation and leisure amenities and experiences.
- 11.1. Provide a quality travel experience for all visitors, employees and residents, and promote a culture of safety and accessibility for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists.

The specific OCP objectives and policies related to accessibility are included in Appendix B of the AAP.

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## BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS

The Planning Department budget provided for staff and consultant resources associated with the completion of this project.

As noted above, the actions will be pursued as resources permit and as opportunities arise. Where possible, actions will be integrated into RMOW ongoing operations and new initiatives. Annual reports to Council on AAP implementation progress will inform the annual budgeting processes. Consideration will also be given to possible senior levels of government grant opportunities that may arise.

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## LÍLWAT NATION & SQUAMISH NATION CONSIDERATIONS

The RMOW is committed to working with the Lílwat People, known in their language as *L'il'wat7úl* and the Squamish People, known in their language as the *Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw* to: create an enduring relationship; establish collaborative processes for Crown land planning; achieve mutual objectives; and enable participation in Whistler's resort economy. This section identifies areas where RMOW activities intersect with these relationships.

The AIC Terms of Reference were revised in December 2021. The revisions included adding the Squamish Lílwat Cultural Centre (SLCC) as a committee voting member. Including Indigenous representation on the AIC through the SLCC enhances the diversity of the AIC and furthers the RMOW's commitment to reconciliation with Lílwat Nation and Squamish Nation. Adding the SLCC as a voting member also positions the RMOW to meet section 9(c) of the ABCA, which requires that accessibility committees must, to the extent possible, have at least one of the members be an Indigenous person. This requirement will apply to the RMOW on September 1, 2023.

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## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Level of community engagement commitment for this project:

Inform     Consult     Involve     Collaborate     Empower

Comment(s):

### *Accessibility and Inclusion Committee*

On April 6, 2022, the AIC was engaged to collect action ideas based off themes/categories within each AAP action area. These action ideas were collected and classified as: already in progress; already in the AAP; added to the AAP; or rejected with a rationale that could be reported back to the committee. All actions that were identified as new actions were added to the preliminary draft action plan.

On May 4, 2022, the AIC met to review the preliminary draft actions. The committee was asked to provide a satisfaction rating on each of the action areas and add additional feedback. The draft actions were then refined based on AIC input.

The updated draft of the AAP was distributed to AIC members to provide final comments from July 28 to August 15. AIC member input was collected through an online worksheet, emails, and one-on-one phone interviews to finalize the AAP.

### *Key Partners*

From May 5 to May 17, 2022, key partner meetings were held with the Whistler Chamber of Commerce, Tourism Whistler, WHA and Whistler Blackcomb to review and refine any actions that related to their business. In August 2022, these organizations and the SLCC were further engaged to review proposed changes to the actions based on community feedback. The input of these community partners further refined the draft actions.

### *Public Consultation*

Community input was sought from June 9 to June 30, 2022. Whistler’s community engagement portal, *Engage Whistler*, was used and there was an in-person display at the Whistler Public Library. One-on-one phone interviews were also available for anyone needing assistance with the online tool. The engagement summary is presented in Appendix E of the AAP.

## **REFERENCES**

Appendix A – Whistler Accessibility Action Plan – September 2022

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## **SUMMARY**

The purpose of this report is to present the final AAP report to Council and request that: Council direct staff to update the AAP within three years as per the future requirements of the ABCA; Council direct staff to provide an annual progress report on the implementation status of the AAP; and that Council endorse the accessibility commitment statement within the AAP.

## **SIGN-OFFS**

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