



City of Kingston
Information Report to Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee
Report Number MAAC-22-008

To: Chair and Members of the Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee

From: Peter Huigenbos, Commissioner, Business, Environment & Projects
Paige Agnew, Commissioner, Community Services

Resource Staff: Colin Wiginton, Director, Arts & Culture Services
Jennifer Campbell, Director, Heritage Services

Date of Meeting: June 2, 2022

Subject: Annual Accessibility Update

Council Strategic Plan Alignment:

Theme: Corporate business

Goal: See above

Executive Summary:

The purpose of this report is to provide the members of the Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee (MAAC) with an annual update regarding the work of the former Cultural Services Department as it relates to accessibility in various forms. In May 2021, the City announced a restructuring of selected departments that included separating Cultural Services into two new Departments: Arts & Culture Services and Heritage Services.

Accessibility is key to the missions and vision of both Arts and Culture Services and Heritage Services, including organizing and leveraging the resources, knowledge and experience of the City of Kingston, along with the community, businesses and public institutions, to build cultural vitality within the arts, heritage and cultural sectors and throughout the community. Accessibility is also something that is considered in relation to the delivery of both departments' core services

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that include asset management and development, programing, sector development and cultural development.

This report includes updates related to work completed in 2021 as well as information related to work currently being pursued in 2022. The effects of the pandemic continued to impact work in 2021, including staffing changes, facility closures, program cancellations and service disruptions. In 2022, work to implement the 2018-2022 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan continues to be affected but staff have worked hard to reopen spaces, reinvigorate programming and review delivery of the necessary core services as well as to fulfill Council's Strategic Priorities while keeping accessibility in mind.

Recommendation:

This report is for information only.

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Authorizing Signatures:

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY COMMISSIONER

**Peter Huigenbos, Commissioner,
Business, Environment &
Projects**

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY COMMISSIONER

**Paige Agnew, Commissioner,
Community Services**

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

**Lanie Hurdle, Chief
Administrative Officer**

Consultation with the following Members of the Corporate Management Team:

Neil Carbone, Commissioner, Corporate Services	Not required
David Fell, President & CEO, Utilities Kingston	Not required
Brad Joyce, Commissioner, Transportation & Public Works	Not required
Desirée Kennedy, Chief Financial Officer & City Treasurer	Not required

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Options/Discussion:

2018-2022 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

In May 2021, the Corporation announced a restructuring of selected departments that included separating Cultural Services into two new departments: (1) Arts & Culture Services and (2) Heritage Services. The items identified as part of the 2018-2022 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan continue to be pursued as planned, though they have been expanded to include issues relevant to heritage planning processes that now fall under the purview of Heritage Services rather than Planning Services. Arts & Culture Services and Heritage Services continue to work together on multiple projects including, but not limited to, the maintenance of public art in the Civic Collection and bringing arts and heritage programming to rural communities.

Both newly-created departments continue to work to address the commitments outlined as part of the 2018-2022 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan as approved through Report Number [MAAC-18-001](#). That includes work across several areas such as Customer Service; Clear and Accessible Communications; and Enhancing Accessibility of Our Public Spaces. While the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the ability to provide in-person experiences and programming, work on the plan continues to progress in meaningful ways, particularly with the re-opening of more spaces in 2022.

Site Operations 2021-2022

Kingston Grand Theatre

The operations of the Kingston Grand Theatre continued to be impacted throughout 2021. The venue remained closed most of the year with some virtual presentations of Grand OnStage being offered between January and April 2021. Over the summer, the Kingston Grand Theatre was leveraged as a location to host a Local Arts Residency Program that made the venue staff and resources available to local Kingston artists to experiment and create new work. In October 2021, the venue opened briefly for a few weeks but closed again due to the emergence of the Omicron variant of COVID-19. It then re-opened again in a phased way starting on March 2, 2022, and returned at full capacity on March 21, 2022, in keeping with all Provincial guidelines and public health requirements.

City-Owned Museums

The PumpHouse was open to a limited degree during 2021 but has now, in 2022, re-opened fully with a complete suite of programming opportunities. The MacLachlan Woodworking Museum remained closed during 2021 but has now reopened as a dedicated programming space with an extensive series of workshops and educational programs. New programs have been developed for the Market Wing Cultural Space at City Hall, a National Historic Site, and additional experiences continue to be available online.

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Customer Service

The Arts & Culture Services and Heritage Services Departments are pursuing multiple actions to improve the customer service experience both directly and indirectly through partnership agreements with external organizations, where applicable.

Policies and Practices, Service Level Agreements

Ensure all organizations who enter into Service Level Agreements with the City of Kingston comply with the requirements of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)*.

All partnership agreements continue to be vetted by the Legal Services Department to ensure the organizations funded by the City of Kingston meet AODA requirements. The primary partnership agreements that are in place include the following:

- Arts & Culture Services: [Kingston Arts Council](#) that includes the administration of the [City of Kingston Arts Fund](#) and the [Kingston Theatre Alliance](#) that includes the annual presentation of the Kick & Push Festival.
- Heritage Services: [Kingston Association of Museums, Art Galleries and Historic Sites](#) and the [Kingston Indigenous Languages Nest](#), which was established in 2021.

Policies and Practices, Strategic Planning

Consider and integrate accessibility to all new strategic initiatives that arise based on Council's Strategic Priorities and/or community needs.

In 2021, Kingston City Council approved a first-ever Creative Industries Strategy that aims to foster arts, culture and social enterprises, which is a Council Strategic Priority. The implementation of the Strategy is being led by the Arts & Culture Services Department with the support of key partners in the community and identifies various themes and are underscored by a priority area and recommendations on accessibility:

- Reinforce Diversity and Inclusion: this work will include pursuing research and consultation to establish commitments that support equity, diversity, inclusion and access related to the creative industries that includes support artists with mixed abilities as well as other groups of artists and creatives who are IBPOC as well as 2SLGBT+.

Policies and Practices, Programming and Pricing

Review best practices within the cultural and heritage sectors and identify community needs related to accessible programming and pricing for the performing arts and cultural programming, and make recommendations specific to the Kingston Grand Theatre, Grand OnStage, Kingston City Hall, PumpHouse and the MacLachlan Woodworking Museum.

Arts Programming

Throughout 2021, inclusive programming at the Kingston Grand Theatre and through the City-owned museums necessarily evolved to be responsive to the needs of residents and in response to provincial and public health guidelines over the past year. Some programming was

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delivered online, in outdoor settings or as smaller, in-person experiences as circumstances allowed. Other arts and culture programming adapted to respond to the Provincial guidelines and public health requirements with the goal of remaining accessible. This programming included:

- Grand OnStage Virtual Presentations: The Grand Onstage program shifted online in 2021 and nearly 3,000 homes enjoyed 11 virtual presentations between October 2020 and April 2021. These presentations could be accessed across multiple devices (desktop computer, tablet, mobile phone) and were nearly all offered free of charge with a select few offered at a subsidized rate. The presentations were digitally archived and included closed captioning, where possible. Staff also experimented with offering hybrid in-person and online performances to provide audiences with some choice as venues re-opened. The advantage of such a hybrid approach is that it also improved accessibility overall, which is an outcome that will continue to be explored to remove barriers as circumstances allow. The equipment needed to support online presentations was also acquired in 2021 with the support of grant funding from Canadian Heritage, and “streaming” has now been introduced as a new service provided by the Kingston Grand Theatre, accessible to all venue renters for a fee.
- Mayor’s Arts Awards: The annual Mayor’s Arts Awards was presented as a hybrid event (in-person and live-streamed) from the Tett Centre for Creativity and Learning on December 6, 2021 and was broadcast live via the City of Kingston’s [YouTube](#) channel with closed captioning in place to increase access.
- Poet Laureate Mentorship Program: In partnership with the Kingston Frontenac Public Library, the Poet Laureate Mentorship Program has been offered free of charge for local area poets and is a program that fosters sector development, which is a core service of the Arts & Culture Services Department.
- Digital Community Arts Series: This series was offered in the summer of 2021 in a modified format in response to the public health restrictions that remained in place for long-term care homes. Over the past few years, Arts & Culture Services has developed and delivered arts programming for residents in various long-term care homes in and around Kingston. Instead of offering in-person programming, a Digital Community Arts Series was created, and six local artists were contracted to create uniquely tailored programs that were shared with key partners digitally.
- Artist Development and the Kingston Grand Theatre Local Arts Residency Program: Throughout the pandemic, efforts have been made to provide local Kingston artists with paid work connected to City-led arts-based programming. The [Local Arts Residency Program](#) is one such example that launched in the spring of 2021 and hosted a total of nine residencies at the Kingston Grand Theatre through the summer and fall. Participants were paid an honorarium and were also offered space and technical support in-kind. Videos were produced and hosted on the [Kingston Grand Theatre YouTube channel](#) with closed captioning to provide access into the residencies. An open call for submissions has also been issued in support of the 2022 Local Arts Residency that continues this support mechanism for local artists. This will include four residencies in July 2022 which

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have expanded to include the Baby Grand as well as the main Regina Rosen Auditorium. The main purpose of the Local Arts Residency Program is to use the resources of the Kingston Grand Theatre to provide Kingston artists with the opportunity to experiment and create new work. The participating artists included musicians, dancers and visual artists but, of note for the Committee members, it also provided an opportunity for noted local artist, [Erin Ball](#), to create new work on creative access that integrated the practice of described performances with music and cirque.

- Grand OnStage Music Education Video Series: The Grand OnStage program normally engages over 6,000 students and educators through the school shows presented on-site at the Kingston Grand Theatre. To reach students and educators and to engage them in performing arts programming during the pandemic, a Music Education Video Series was created featuring six local Kingston musicians who performed but also shared their experiences and insights as local artists who have trained and are pursuing professional careers in music. A study and learning guide was created by a local teaching artist to accompany the series and, to date, 22 classes have registered to access the videos free of charge, totaling approximately 550 students.

Heritage Programming

- Online Educational Opportunities: In the spring of 2020, staff responded to the closure of the City-owned museums by developing online museum education programs. Online opportunities continued to be available through 2021 and some will remain part of heritage programming even as spaces open for in-person visits. In 2021, a series of online presentations and discussions was organized in conjunction with the PumpHouse's exhibition on the refugee experience: *Refuge Canada*.
- Websites: We continue to update and monitor the online presence of the museums and Civic Collection to ensure that the broader community has convenient access to resources for research, learning and enjoyment. The impacts of the pandemic demonstrated the need for online opportunities and the need to keep these up-to-date and relevant.
- PumpHouse Exhibitions and Walking Tours: In 2021, the PumpHouse was open for prebooked, small-group site tours. These tours were guided by museum staff and offered a personalized experience of *Refuge Canada*. In 2022, the PumpHouse has returned to drop-in visitation and continues to offer personalized tours to visitors of the new exhibition: *On the Move: 400 Years of Transportation in Kingston*. Accessibility was a key aim of the exhibit, with auditory and tactile elements to increase the way the exhibition can be experienced. Sustainability was another aim of the exhibit, which was designed and constructed in-house involving recyclable and reused materials to reduce environmental impact.
- Museum Tours and Walking Tours: The PumpHouse also offered guided outdoor explorations of Ontario Street based on the 2019 exhibition, *Ontario Street: Brewers, Bakers & Boilermakers*. This walking tour delved into the history of Ontario Street, a space that helped define and form Kingston as a City. Walking tours will resume in late spring 2022.

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- Programming: Due to COVID-19, programming at the PumpHouse continued to be reduced in 2021 with the option for a limited number of small-group opportunities while the MacLachlan Woodworking Museum remained closed. Some educational programs were also available at City Hall. Moving into 2022, a full suite of programming is now available at the PumpHouse and the MacLachlan has transitioned to a dedicated programming space with woodworking and environment-focused programs suitable for a range of ages and abilities. New heritage-focused educational programs have been developed for delivery at City Hall and at external sites to bring visitors to parts of the City that are less frequently highlighted.
- City Hall Tours: The pandemic impacted the ability to provide tours of City Hall, although some were offered on a very limited basis. This reduction was due in part to staffing limitations as the capacity to provide tour opportunities has traditionally been tied to the availability of volunteer tour guides who became unavailable during the pandemic. Staff are currently creating a plan to make City Hall tours in 2022 more widely available while retaining a free or pay-what-you-can pricing format.
- Market Wing Cultural Space: The re-developed first floor of the Market Wing, located within Kingston City Hall, opened to the public on a limited basis in February 2021 but with the developing pandemic did not stay open. The space currently remains closed with plans to reopen in late spring. This accessible space has been designed to house exhibitions and programs that combine history and the arts to highlight Kingston and to explore a diversity of histories, stories and ideas relevant to both residents and visitors. The Market Wing Cultural Space will in future also include dedicated space to showcase Indigenous history and culture with content developed by an Indigenous curator and in consultation with Indigenous community members and Nations.

Pricing

- Removing financial barriers to the performing arts and cultural programming continues to be a priority for the Arts & Culture Services and Heritage Services Departments. Since 2017, the Kingston Grand Theatre and the City-owned museums have participated in the [Municipal Fee Assistance Program](#) (MFAP). The Grand Theatre and City-owned museums have also participated in other discount programs including the Impact program, the Newcomer's Access Pass through Kingston Immigration Partners, youth and military discounts as well as discounts with a Kingston Transit Pass. Additionally, the PumpHouse museum participates in the [Courtesy Pass program](#) offered through the Kingston Frontenac Public Library. Free or pay-what-you-can heritage programs are also available at Kingston City Hall. In 2021, a new Artist and Arts Worker Discount program was established for the Grand OnStage, providing 50% off ticket prices for selected shows to make experiencing the performing arts more affordable to a demographic so negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2022, renewed efforts are being made to build awareness of these discount programs and to rebuild consumer confidence and participation in the arts, heritage and culture as facilities and programs come back online more fully after a two-year gap.

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Heritage Planning

Service Delivery: Heritage Planning staff provide in-person service at the Heritage Resource Centre. This site and these services will be enhanced with improved barrier free access once the exterior ramp to the Market Wing Cultural Space is constructed (expected late 2022). Staff are also providing a full scope of heritage planning services digitally and are available to modify systems and support client access to services where barriers are identified.

- Policies and Plans: Heritage Planning staff have completed a review of policy documents to identify areas where City heritage policies require updates to better reflect the City's commitment to accessible public spaces. Both the Old Sydenham Heritage Conservation District (HCD) Plan and the Barriefield Village HCD require updates in this regard. Staff are currently working with the Transportation and Public Works departments to review plans for development where heritage goals and accessibility goals intersect. This work will continue as new plans are created, and existing policies and plans are updated.

Clear and Accessible Communications

The Arts & Culture and Heritage Services Department continue to pursue actions to ensure the delivery of clear and accessible communications:

- Printed Materials, Museums and Heritage-Related Programming: Review best practices within the sector and identify community needs related to museums and heritage-related programming; and make recommendations specific to Kingston City Hall, PumpHouse and the MacLachlan Woodworking Museum.

All produced and printed exhibition materials follow accessible guidelines for font size, style and contrast that are built into design briefs and vetted by staff. In 2019, the curatorial team worked with CNIB Kingston while planning the *Collecting Histories* exhibition. Unfortunately, the implementation of those plans and the ability to maintain the collaboration were put on hold due to COVID-19. In 2022, efforts will be made to reconnect with the local CNIB group to develop braille text for future exhibitions. All exhibition text is produced in both official languages, and efforts are made to provide City Hall, PumpHouse and Ontario Street tours in multiple languages, depending on the linguistic capacity of staff and volunteers.

- Public Art Signage: Review best practices within public art and continue to consult with the MAAC Public Art Project Team to review options for onsite public art signage.

A Public Art Project Team has been established through MAAC and staff responsible for facilitating the Public Art Program continue to engage with them on various public art projects and programs, including the development of onsite signage.

In 2021, additional work was also done to develop and install accessible on-site signage and/or interpretive materials to support the Public Art Program that includes providing information in alternate formats. Last year also saw the development of an Arts Walk to support the Public Art program that is one of Council's Strategic Priorities. The Arts Walk currently exists as an online

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map highlighting information and images about City-owned public artworks that can be accessed via computer, tablet or mobile phone. The 2022 iteration of the Arts Walk, which is intended to evolve over time as a multi-phase project, will explore enhancing accessibility through the addition of options such as audio recordings to complement the text-based information provided as well as the potential addition of commentary from artists offering their interpretation of the works that have been installed.

Enhancing Accessibility of Our Public Spaces

The Arts & Culture Services and Heritage Services Departments are pursuing actions to enhance the accessibility of the venues it manages:

- Infrastructure Planning and Projects, Kingston City Hall: Leverage technology to provide visitors to Kingston City Hall with alternative access to spaces within the building that may be difficult to access using virtual reality tools.

Providing digital access to physical spaces has been a priority but was proven even more critical during the pandemic when on-site visits were significantly constrained. A digital tour of Kingston City Hall with a Virtual Reality (VR) enhancement remains available through the Heritage Resource Centre located on site and is available online through the [City of Kingston website](#). The [Accessibility](#) page on the PumpHouse website provides information on different supports available prior to and during site visits. This page also includes information about what to expect during a site visit and includes resources such as a sensory friendly map and PumpHouse Social Story. The websites for both the PumpHouse and MacLachlan Woodworking Museum also feature virtual tours that support pre-planning for site visits as well as alternate forms of access.

- Infrastructure Planning and Projects, Public Art: Ensure all public art projects comply with the Ontario Building Code's requirements for accessibility in the built environment and align with Facility Accessibility Design Standards (FADS), where possible.

In 2021, three permanent public artworks were installed, marking a major milestone for the portfolio. The MAAC Public Art Project Team had been consulted on these projects and will continue to be involved as new capital public art projects are developed. As momentum around the Public Art Program continues to build, accessibility and the removal of barriers are key to ensuring equitable access to all public artworks. All projects are completed in compliance with the Ontario Building Code requirements related to accessibility and they also align with the 2019 Facility Accessibility Design Standards, where possible.

Additional Enhancements

In addition to ensuring that museum spaces continue to be accessible, Heritage Services has also been involved in facilitating the lease of the City-owned property at 610 Montreal Street to the Kingston Indigenous Languages Nest (KILN) and in the preparation of a grant application to fund the renovation of this space to make it accessible and sustainable in accordance with

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Indigenous community initiatives. This plan includes the installation of an elevator/lift as well as accessible washrooms.

Accessibility-related enhancements have also been made to the Kingston Grand Theatre in 2021 and 2022. This was prompted by a brand refresh launched in October 2021 and elements of that refresh have also been integrated as part of the interior building design. The primary purpose of that integration is to engage patrons but it has also provided an opportunity to improve accessibility related to light levels in the main lobby as well as in relation to colour contrasts to the walls, floors and doors. Detectable warning surfaces have also been added to the interior staircases and improved stair nosing has also been installed in accordance with the 2019 Facility Accessibility Design Standards.

Removal of Barriers to Municipally Sponsored Arts and Culture Life in Kingston

Over the last several years, staff have been providing regular updates related to the 2015 report 'Removal of Barriers to Municipally Sponsored Arts and Culture Life in Kingston' ([Report Number ARCP-15-003](#)). All but two of the recommendations identified were completed when staff provided their annual update to MAAC in 2021. Now, the work related to the first of the two recommendations is currently underway and is expected to be complete in Q1 2023. The work related to the second recommendation is now complete as outlined below.

- **Ensure the City of Kingston Arts Fund reflects best practices in relation to other arts funding programs in the areas of diversity and inclusion** - The need to review the City of Kingston Arts Fund was first identified back in 2017 but has been delayed several times due to shifting priorities and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has also impacted the arts, entertainment and recreation sectors more than any others. This means a review of the City of Kingston Arts Fund needs to consider the recovery of the arts and culture sectors as well as their long-term viability and sustainability. In 2021, Kingston City Council approved one-time funding totalling \$200,000 to support local artists and not-for-profit arts organizations. The lessons learned because of distributing that one-time funding have helped inform the development of an RFP to be issued in Q2 2022 to hire a consultant. Once hired, that consultant will work with staff and key partners to review the City of Kingston Arts Fund and to facilitate a public engagement process to ensure this funding program reflects municipal best practices, that it meets the needs of the arts and culture sectors, that barriers to participation are removed and that it fosters equity, diversity and inclusion now and in the future. The review of the City of Kingston Arts Fund is expected to be complete by Q1 2023.
- **An accommodations and communications plan will be developed to create and adapt performance, rehearsal & dressing spaces in the Regina Rosen Auditorium and to a lesser extent, the Baby Grand** - As previously reported, staff issued a request for proposals (RFP) in December 2019 to procure consultants to assess the performance spaces within the Grand Theatre in terms of accessibility, with a particular emphasis on

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the Regina Rosen Auditorium. The intent of this assessment is to seek ways to improve access to the performance spaces within the facility for performers, staff and other users who rely on wheelchairs or other mobility devices. The firm +VG Architects was contracted and, along with DesignABLE Environments, have led this assessment work over the past two years. The consulting team met with staff, users and members of MAAC in August 2020 and completed their own facility assessment process. Numerous conceptual plans were explored over subsequent months to identify both temporary and permanent solutions to improve access related to the performance, rehearsal & dressing spaces within the Kingston Grand Theatre. The results of this process is summarized below and will be further reviewed by staff to assess their viability and for possible inclusion as part of future capital work plans and budgets with members of MAAC being engaged as needed on a project-by-project basis.

Summary, Kingston Grand Theatre, Accessibility Audit of Performance Spaces

Current Solutions - There are two potential short-term solutions that could be explored further to improve accessibility for artists: (1) Regina Rosen Auditorium, provide a moveable trailer and (2) Baby Grand Theatre, convert the existing women's washroom adjacent to the space to an accessible dressing room/washroom. Neither option improves access for staff or technicians and they also create other potential issues both outside and inside the existing building footprint that would need to be addressed and resolved.

Future Solutions - The long-term solutions that were explored had the potential to improve access for staff and technicians as well as artists, but the constraints in terms of building footprint and cost are significant. Several options that involved reconfiguring the building interior were explored and rejected due to their impracticality within the existing footprint of the building. Expanding the building's footprint on the Grand Theatre property is not possible as the building occupies 100% of the property boundary owned by the City. Neighbouring properties include privately owned buildings that are currently being used for a combination of commercial and residential purposes. The only other potential future solution would be to build a new facility of at least 40,000 to 45,000 square feet to meet contemporary building codes and AODA requirements. The existing building is approximately 28,000 square feet; therefore, a new location would be required to facilitate a new building.

Update, Corporate Restructuring

As stated at the beginning of this report, the former Cultural Services Department became two different departments in May 2021.

Existing Policy/By-Law:

None

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Notice Provisions:

None

Accessibility Considerations:

None

Financial Considerations:

None

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Kevin Gibbs, Manager, Heritage Programming, Heritage Services

Andrea Gummo, Manager, Heritage Planning, Heritage Services

Melanie Banks, Supervisor, Museum Operations and Collections, Heritage Services

Exhibits Attached:

None