

Municipality of the District of St. Mary's Accessibility Plan 2025-28 Update



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1 Background

The Municipality of the District of St. Mary's is committed to creating an inclusive and accessible community where residents and visitors of all ages and abilities can fully participate in civic life. The Accessibility Plan is a strategic tool designed to guide the Municipality in identifying, removing, and preventing barriers in municipal facilities, programs, services, and public spaces.

This Plan builds on previous accessibility initiatives and reflects the Municipality's ongoing commitment to equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility. It provides a framework for implementing practical improvements, setting priorities, and monitoring progress over time.

This Accessibility Plan will be integrated into a broader Inclusion Plan that addresses inclusion, diversity, equity, anti-hate, and accessibility. The Accessibility Plan is being completed first to meet the update requirements of the Government of Nova Scotia, with the broader Inclusion Plan anticipated for completion in 2026.

The development of the Plan was informed by the Nova Scotia Accessibility Act and best practices in accessibility and universal design. It also draws on input from community members, municipal staff, and other stakeholders to ensure the Plan responds to the real experiences and needs of those who use municipal services.

The Municipality aims to foster a more welcoming and accessible environment, promote safe and equitable participation in community life, and ensure that accessibility is considered in all aspects of municipal decision-making and service delivery. In 2023 the Municipality of the District of St. Mary's published its first Accessibility Plan. Barriers to accessibility were assessed throughout the Municipality and a list of actions was created to support the removal of these barriers. 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.

2 What We Heard: Community Consultation

2.1 Background

Community engagement was a key component in completing the Accessibility Plan update. Residents are the primary users of municipal programs, services, and facilities, and their lived experiences provide valuable insight into what works well and what barriers exist. To gather this information, the Municipality conducted a range of consultation activities in the fall of 2025, including two in-person workshops held in September, an online survey available to all community members, and attendance at community events across the Municipality. Through these efforts, feedback was collected from over thirty-four participants, helping to identify accessibility needs, priorities, and opportunities for improvement. This input has directly informed the recommendations and initiatives outlined in this Plan.

2.2 Feedback Summary

Community feedback played a vital role in shaping this Accessibility Plan update. Through in-person workshops, an online survey, and engagement at community events, residents and visitors shared their experiences, identified barriers, and suggested opportunities for improvement.

Participants highlighted several common themes, including the need for improved physical accessibility in municipal facilities and outdoor spaces, improved and more equitable access to programs and services across the Municipality, and more transportation options to support participation. Feedback also emphasized the importance of clear communication, flexible program delivery, and affordability to ensure everyone can take part in community life. The insights gathered helped the Municipality better understand what is working well and where improvements are needed. This feedback directly informed the priorities, achievements, and recommendations outlined in this plan and will continue to guide future accessibility efforts.

3 Achievements

This section highlights the ways the Municipality has taken action to create a more inclusive and accessible environment. Each initiative and improvement reflects our shared commitment to supporting all residents in living, working, and engaging in St. Mary's.

3.1 The Built Environment Accessibility Achievements

- In 2024, automatic door buttons were installed on all public washrooms and dressing rooms at the St. Mary's Recplex, improving ease of access for all visitors.
- In 2025, automatic door buttons were installed at the Sherbrooke Public Library entrances, exits and the washroom, improving ease of access for all visitors.
- In 2025, new rubber flooring was installed at the St. Mary's Recplex, designed to eliminate gaps and heaves for safer, smoother movement.
- In 2025, accessible parking spaces were added at the St. Mary's Recplex to support convenient access for visitors with mobility needs.
- In 2025, accessible parking spaces were added at the 16 Main Street Parking Lot, enhancing access to Pioneer Park.

3.2 Information and Communication Accessibility Achievements

- In 2025, the audio-visual equipment in Council Chambers was upgraded to improve clarity and accessibility for virtual meeting attendees.

3.4 Employment Accessibility Achievements

- In 2023, the Municipality adopted a new Human Resources Policy that strengthens inclusive employment practices by supporting the hiring, training, and accommodation of individuals with disabilities.
- Standing desks were purchased, supporting workplace accessibility and comfort for employees with diverse needs.

3.5 Service Accessibility Achievements

- The Municipality's Equipment Loan Program has expanded its inventory to include adaptive equipment such as sleds and sledges, making recreation more accessible for everyone.
- Recreation programs are open for registration both in person and online, ensuring easy access for all community members.

3.6 Transportation Accessibility Achievements

- To improve access and connectivity for residents, the Municipality supported the development of a non-profit transportation service. In 2023, the St. Mary's Association for Rural Transit was formed, helping community members travel more easily throughout the Municipality.

4 Recommendations

These recommendations reflect the voices and experiences of the people who live, work, and visit our community. They are designed to help the Municipality identify and remove barriers, enhance access to programs and services, and foster an environment where everyone—regardless of ability—can fully participate in community life. By taking these actions, the Municipality can build a more inclusive, welcoming, and connected community for all residents.

4.1 The Built Environment

The Municipality of the District of St. Mary's is committed to ensuring that public buildings and spaces are accessible to people of all ages and abilities, whether the spaces are owned, leased, or operated by the Municipality. Building on this commitment, the following recommendations outline practical actions the Municipality can take to remove barriers, improve accessibility, and create a more inclusive community for everyone.

- Provide accessible seating at key community facilities, including St. Mary's Recplex and the Sherbrooke Public Library, to ensure all residents can comfortably participate in programs and activities.
- Provide seating throughout Pioneer Park and Stonewall Park to improve accessibility along trails and open spaces, ensuring all residents can comfortably enjoy outdoor areas.
- There currently are no fully accessible washrooms available in municipal spaces. Ensure at least one fully accessible washroom is available at each of the four municipal facilities.
- Repair Municipal Office entrance accessible door.
- Support community partners, local businesses, and organizations in making accessibility improvements by promoting available funding programs and sharing information about grants, resources, and best practices.

- Improve lighting in municipal parks to increase safety, accessibility, and usability for all residents, including during evening hours.
- Equip public and staff washrooms at the Municipal Office with push-button access to improve accessibility and independence for all users.
- Equip the Community Room at the Municipal Office with push-button access to improve accessibility and independence for all users.

4.2 Information and Communications

The Municipality is committed to providing information and communications that are clear and accessible to people of all ages and abilities. Using plain and simple language helps ensure that residents, visitors, and stakeholders can easily understand and engage with municipal services. Building on this commitment, the following recommendations identify actions the Municipality can take to enhance accessibility in communications and better serve the entire community.

- Establish a Communications Strategy that clearly outlines how to ensure all municipal communications are accessible, inclusive, and available in multiple formats to meet the diverse needs of the community.
- Develop programs and resources to help residents, staff, and community partners better understand accessibility, remove barriers, and foster an inclusive community for everyone.

4.3 Employment

The Municipality is committed to providing barrier-free employment opportunities for people of all ages and abilities. It strives to make employment practices and workplaces accessible for both new and existing employees. Building on this commitment, the following recommendations outline actions the Municipality can take to further support an inclusive and accessible workplace for all.

- Develop an inclusive hiring strategy to promote diversity, equity, and accessibility in all recruitment and staffing processes.
- Deliver Foundations of Accessibility training to municipal staff and Council to build awareness, strengthen capacity, and support inclusive decision-making.
- Encourage leadership and staff to model inclusive language and call out harmful language when it occurs, fostering a respectful and supportive environment.
- Establish a clear process for employees to request accessibility support, ensuring all staff have the tools and resources they need to work effectively.

4.4 Services

The Municipality is committed to providing equitable services to individuals of all ages and abilities. Building on this commitment, the following recommendations identify practical actions the Municipality can take to ensure services are accessible, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of the entire community.

- Deliver recreation programs throughout all districts of the Municipality, helping remove location-related barriers and improve access for all community members.
- Create a subsidy to help residents overcome cost-related barriers, ensuring that municipal programs and services are accessible and inclusive for all community members.
- Develop a family-based registration form that allows families to register as a unit, rather than requiring individual forms for each family member, making participation more convenient and accessible.
- Offer flexible service and program options to support participation by residents who are unable to attend during regular hours.
- Enhance the Equipment Loan Program by adding accessible equipment for all seasons, ensuring residents of all abilities can enjoy recreation year-round.

- Ensure residents can attend fitness programs without requiring a companion, supporting independence and participation.

4.5 Transportation

The Municipality is committed to providing accessible transportation for people of all ages and abilities in St. Mary's. The following recommendations outline ways to make travel easier, safer, and more inclusive for everyone.

- Develop an accessible multi-use trail network connecting Main Street, Sherbrooke, and northeast Sherbrooke, improving safe and inclusive access to schools and essential services through active transportation.
- Explore creating a network that connects residents who need transportation with those willing to provide it, improving access to municipal programs, services, and community activities.

5 Implementing & Monitoring the Plan

The Municipal Inclusion, Diversity, Inclusion, Equity, Anti-Hate & Accessibility Advisory Committee, along with appointed staff and council are responsible for adopting and overseeing the MODSM Enabling Accessibility Plan.

The Chief Administrative Officer is responsible for implementing the plan and assigning an Accessibility Coordinator.

The MODSM Accessibility Coordinator is responsible for receiving and responding to public concerns, complaints, and suggestions. You can contact the Accessibility Coordinator at <mailto:info@saint-mary's.ca> or by calling [902-522-2049](tel:902-522-2049).

The Accessibility Advisory Committee is responsible for giving feedback and recommendations to the Municipal Council. The Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee will prepare an annual report for council for the fiscal year ending March 31 of each year. This report card will measure the performance of the actions in this plan. The Committee may also make recommendations to improve the plan. The annual report will be a public document that will be posted to the MODSM website.

6 Glossary

Accessibility: the practice of making information, services, transportation and/or environments sensible, meaningful, and usable for as many people as possible.

Accommodation: a personalized adaption of a service or environment to overcome the barriers faces by individuals of all ages and abilities.

Active Transportation: refers to all forms of human powered transportation. Most commonly, it refers to walking and cycling, but also rollerblading, skateboarding, running, wheelchair use, skating, canoeing, kayaking, snowshoeing, and cross-country skiing.

Barrier: anything that stops or challenges the full and effective participation in society of an individual of any age or ability.

Communication: the process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs, or behavior.

Disability: Nova Scotia's Accessibility Act defines a disability as a physical, mental, intellectual, learning or sensory impairment, including an episodic disability, that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders an individuals full and effective participation in society.

Equity / Equitable: an individual or group is provided with the same resources or opportunities. Equity recognizes that each person has a different circumstance and allocates the exact resources and opportunities needed to reach an equal outcome.

Plain Language: language that is clear and easy for the reader or listener to understand.