

Update on the Toronto Accessibility Design Guidelines

Date: October 5, 2021

To: General Government and Licensing Committee

From: Executive Director, Corporate Real Estate Management

Wards: All

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the Toronto Accessibility Design Guidelines (T.A.D.G.). The T.A.D.G. is a design reference document available to all sectors to conduct accessibility audits and to plan developments as the City works towards making Toronto a barrier-free community.

In July 2021, Corporate Real Estate Management (C.R.E.M.) updated the T.A.D.G. to set City-wide technical requirements for determining accessibility upgrade requirements across City facilities and public spaces. As well, the T.A.D.G. was updated to align with current legislative requirements and best practices in the area of accessible design to remove barriers within the built environment. C.R.E.M. conducted an extensive consultation process with internal and external stakeholders, including City divisions, members of the public, and individuals representing the disability community, to develop this iteration of the T.A.D.G. Feedback from these consultations will continue to shape the T.A.D.G. as a living document, with a formal review and update of the document to be scheduled at regular intervals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive Director, Corporate Real Estate Managements recommends that:

1. City Council adopt the updated Toronto Accessibility Design Guidelines in Attachment 3.
2. City Council direct all City Divisions to use the Toronto Accessibility Design Guidelines as the mandatory accessibility resource that guides all City owned renovations and newly constructed buildings and public spaces, and any future Toronto Accessibility Design Guidelines updated by the Executive Director of Corporate Real Estate Management Division.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There are no financial impacts arising from the adoption of the recommendation in this report.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial implications as identified in the Financial Impact section.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

The T.A.D.G. affirms and strengthens the City's capacity to identify, remove and prevent barriers to access in the City's parks, streets and facilities for people with disabilities, seniors, families with children, and other Torontonians whose physical, cognitive, cultural and navigational needs are met through these design requirements, in accordance with the requirements of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act A.O.D.A.

The City's commitment to provide accessible, equitable and barrier-free services to all residents, visitors and employees helps to enhance the City's capacity to achieve customer service excellence, meet legislative and policy obligations, and make Toronto an equitable, inclusive and prosperous city.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting on March 31, 2015, City Council adopted item MM5.16, "Modernizing City By-Laws and Policies to Make Toronto More Accessible," directing the City Manager to work with City divisions and stakeholders, including the Disability Issues Committee, on updating the Accessibility Design Guidelines, and to work with City divisions to ensure that City by-laws, policies, and protocols align with standards for the built environment and design of public space under the A.O.D.A. and Ontario Building Code.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2015.MM5.16>

At its meeting on August 5 2009, City Council endorsed the Statement of Commitment Regarding Persons with Disabilities. The Statement affirms that the City supports the goals of the A.O.D.A., and will establish policies, practices and procedures which are consistent with the accessibility standards established under the A.O.D.A., including accessible customer service, information and communication, employment, the built environment and transportation.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2009.EX33.4>

At its meeting on May 18, 19 and 20, 2004, City Council adopted the report from the Chief Administrative Officer titled "Submission of the City of Toronto Accessibility Design Guidelines," as a clause embodied in Report No. 4 of the Policy and Finance Committee.

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/2004/agendas/council/cc040518/pof4rpt/cl002.pdf>

COMMENTS

Background on the T.A.D.G.

The T.A.D.G. serves as a guiding document in ensuring accessibility best practices are considered in building and renovating City facilities and public spaces. It describes the required level of accessibility that goes beyond that of the minimum legislative requirements, and aligns with the City's commitment to building an inclusive society, and in providing an accessible environment in which persons with disabilities can access the City's goods, services and facilities, including all buildings, public spaces, information and communications.

Under the Council-approved Corporate Accessibility Policy, the City is required to maintain the T.A.D.G. as the mandatory accessibility resource that guides all City renovations and newly constructed buildings and public spaces. The completion of the updated T.A.D.G. is an important milestone for the City's overall compliance with the A.O.D.A., and will set City-wide technical standards and benchmarks for determining accessibility upgrade requirements across City infrastructure such as buildings, parks, trails and public spaces. The requirements outlined in the T.A.D.G. meet or exceed the accessibility standards established under the A.O.D.A., including accessible customer service, information and communication, employment, the built environment and transportation.

Updating the T.A.D.G.

In 2014, C.R.E.M. retained the services of an accessibility consultant to coordinate and administer updates to the T.A.D.G. The technical requirements noted in the T.A.D.G. were harmonized with other applicable standards, by-laws and guidelines within the City, including zoning, engineering and construction technical standards for public realm infrastructure, such as pedestrian clearways, crosswalks and curb ramps. The T.A.D.G. requirements were also benchmarked against similar guidelines from other municipalities, as well as other City standards for the built environment.

Internal and External Consultation

The T.A.D.G. was updated in collaboration with external consultants and internal working groups at the City (Attachment 1), including an Advisory Stakeholder Group comprised of both internal and external stakeholders, and the Technical Decision Committee comprised of subject matter experts across City divisions.

C.R.E.M. engaged relevant subject matter experts from City divisions, the private and non-profit sectors, as well as members of the public from the disability community with lived experience who would be impacted by the T.A.D.G. C.R.E.M. worked closely with the People and Equity division to finalize the updated T.A.D.G. Comments and technical feedback on the contents and applicability of the guidelines were collected at various stages of its development since 2014.

C.R.E.M. presented the updated T.A.D.G. to the Toronto Accessibility Advisory Committee in June 2021. This was followed by a public consultation on the T.A.D.G.

beginning in September 2021, which consisted of virtual public information sessions, public and staff feedback surveys, and a social media campaign. C.R.E.M. is reviewing the feedback received through these channels, and will incorporate any applicable amendments into future iterations of the T.A.D.G.

Living Document and Future Updates

C.R.E.M. is committed to maintaining T.A.D.G. as a living document that will allow for future feedback and periodic updates to reflect the changing needs of our population, and to address any updates to applicable legislation, by-laws or policies as required by the City, the A.O.D.A., or the Ontario Building Code. Every three (3) to five (5) years, C.R.E.M. will conduct a detailed review of the T.A.D.G. to ensure any necessary updates are made.

Application, Compliance and Quality Assurance

In response to feedback from stakeholders and comments received from the City's advisory committees, the updated T.A.D.G. specifies how to apply it to existing City owned and leased facilities, including exterior amenities such as multi-use trails, parks, and public spaces like pedestrian clearways and road crossings.

In accordance with the City's [Multi-Year Accessibility Plan](#), all divisions responsible for capital work within the built environment will be responsible for implementing projects in compliance with the T.A.D.G. The updated T.A.D.G. will be mandatory for all new City construction and major renovation projects, and provides guidance on how to apply these requirements when renovating or retrofitting existing facilities and public realm. Compliance to these guidelines is intended to provide the highest level of accessibility possible, while taking physical barriers and technical constraints into consideration.

The T.A.D.G recognizes that compliance may be technically infeasible in certain circumstances, including projects within existing facilities, heritage properties, or existing public realm with specific infrastructure challenges due to the age or condition of the structure. In these instances, T.A.D.G. has a compliance approval process, which allows for project teams to choose a renovation compliance alternative solution, or propose their own solution and seek approval from an inter-divisional accessibility governance body chaired by C.R.E.M. To further facilitate compliance, T.A.D.G. will also be embedded into City divisions' business processes and contracts for implementing capital projects.

Best Practice and Bench Marking

Recognizing that accessible and inclusive design results in fewer accommodation requests, complaints and subsequent renovations to address these needs, City divisions have applied the best practice requirements in the draft T.A.D.G. to their capital construction projects since 2015.

The guidelines represent a best practice resource describing a level of accessibility that goes beyond that of the minimum legislative requirements. Based on the needs of the population, and the high public use of City facilities, the revised guidelines will meet or

exceed most requirements outlined in the current A.O.D.A. and Ontario Building Code for the built environment, and will incorporate existing industry best practice information, where applicable. By consolidating these requirements into one single reference document, new or retrofitted City spaces will have consistency in adhering to the highest level of accessibility.

T.A.D.G. will form the benchmark for future accessibility audits for new and existing City facilities and public spaces. City divisions such as C.R.E.M., Parks, Forestry and Recreation, and Transportation Services have been proactively applying the current draft best practice requirements to their current audits and capital construction projects since the first draft was made available in 2015. C.R.E.M. has been implementing its A.O.D.A. Capital Accessibility Upgrades Program valued at approximately two hundred million dollars. The Program is responsible for ensuring the 433 properties in its portfolio are upgraded to meet the City's goal of becoming an accessible City.

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SIGNATURE

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ATTACHMENTS

1. Attachment 1: Toronto Accessibility Design Guidelines Stakeholders
2. Attachment 2: Toronto Accessibility Design Guidelines Governance Structure
2. Attachment 3: Toronto Accessibility Design Guidelines