

DECISION/DIRECTION NOTE

Title: BlindSquare Event Wayfinding Pilot Project Recommendations

Date Prepared: November 14, 2022

Report To: Inclusion Advisory Committee

Councillor and Role: Debbie Hanlon, Inclusion Advisory Committee

Ward: N/A

Decision/Direction Required:

A decision is required with regards to future implementation of the BlindSquare Event Wayfinding and Navigation tool as an accessibility feature at Downtown Pedestrian Mall Events.

Discussion – Background and Current Status:

In 2020, feedback was collected on inclusion and accessibility concerns after the first Downtown Pedestrian Mall Event took place. It was noted that wayfinding was difficult for people with vision loss or blindness due to the addition of event specific temporary items such as parklets, barricades, garbage receptacles and rest area furniture. Based on this feedback, one solution included that the City investigate implementing a wayfinding and navigation tool to assist pedestrian mall visitors at future events.

Through procurement, it was determined that [BlindSquare](#) Event was the most suitable technology to acquire. In addition to having the ability to be programmed specifically for the pedestrian mall, and having local support of the CNIB, BlindSquare is used worldwide and more specifically is used in many locations across Canada.

In 2021, the City of St. John's and CNIB partnered to program the app for the Pedestrian Mall and the pilot project was soft launched. In June of 2022 the pilot was fully launched including promotion via multiple media availabilities, a media release, information sharing via City socials and CNIB socials as well as through the Inclusion Advisory Committee. The City and CNIB also offered two user orientation sessions.

In September of 2022, a public engagement process was initiated as part of the project evaluation. It included a [public engagement webpage](#), a survey and stakeholder meetings. Results of the public engagement are available via the What We Heard Document. The feedback received was primarily positive with a consensus for the City to continue to implement the BlindSquare Event app as a wayfinding and navigation tool at the pedestrian mall. Some negative feedback was received regarding the technology being available for iOS operating devices only during the pilot with no Android version in place. BlindSquare have

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indicated that an android version is in development but have yet to confirm an official release date. The City anticipates it will be available for 2023 Downtown Pedestrian Mall. CNIB local have confirmed that they have the capacity to continue to provide full assistance service and amendments ongoing upon approval.

Key Considerations/Implications:

1. Budget/Financial Implications:

- 2021 and 2022 installation, network access and consultancy fees totaled \$11,080.00.
- Ongoing annual fees total \$2100.00.

2. Partners or Other Stakeholders:

- CNIB Local
- CNIB Frontier Accessibility
- Inclusion Advisory Committee
- Community Services Department (Events, Healthy City and Inclusion)
- Communications Division
- PERS
- LIS

3. Alignment with Strategic Directions:

A Connected City: Increase and improve opportunities for residents to connect with each other and the City.

An Effective City: Achieve service excellence through collaboration, innovation and modernization grounded in client needs.

4. Alignment with Adopted Plans:

- Healthy City Strategy

5. Accessibility and Inclusion:

The City works with the Inclusion Advisory Committee to identify, prevent and remove barriers that prevent access to municipal initiatives. The Inclusion Advisory Committee recommended the City investigate a wayfinding and navigation tool to increase independence for visitors of the pedestrian mall who benefit from wayfinding and navigation tools.

6. Legal or Policy Implications: None

7. Privacy Implications: None

8. Engagement and Communications Considerations:

An annual communication plan will be necessary under the direction of Communications Division.

9. Human Resource Implications: None

10. Procurement Implications:

Any future procurement of Blind Square applications must follow Provincial requirements.

11. Information Technology Implications: None

12. Other Implications: None

Recommendation:

That Council approve continued use of the BlindSquare technology as a wayfinding and navigation tool at the Downtown Pedestrian Mall pending the anticipated release of an android version.

Prepared by: Trisha Rose, Accessibility and Inclusion Facilitator

Approved by:

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	BlindSquare Event Pilot Project Recommendations.docx
Attachments:	- WWH BlindSquare 2022.pdf
Final Approval Date:	Nov 15, 2022

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Natalie Godden - Nov 15, 2022 - 5:17 AM

Tanya Haywood - Nov 15, 2022 - 11:02 AM