

**Accessibility Advisory Committee Meeting
Agenda**

Wednesday, January 22, 2025, 5:30 p.m.

Open to public attendance in Committee Room G

Lower Level, City Hall

Committee members may attend electronically

We recognize and respect that New Westminster is on the unceded and unsurrendered land of the Halkomelem speaking peoples. We acknowledge that colonialism has made invisible their histories and connections to the land. As a City, we are learning and building relationships with the people whose lands we are on.

	Pages
1. <u>CALL TO ORDER AND LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</u>	
The Chair will open the meeting and provide a land acknowledgement.	
2. <u>CHANGES TO THE AGENDA</u>	
Additions or deletion of items.	
3. <u>ADOPTION OF MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS</u>	
3.1 July 24, 2024	2
3.2 September 25, 2024	10
4. <u>REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS</u>	
Staff and guest reports and presentations for information, discussion, and/or action	
4.1 Final Draft Accessibility Plan Update	16
5. <u>NEW BUSINESS</u>	
Items added to the agenda at the beginning of the meeting.	
6. <u>END OF MEETING</u>	



Accessibility Advisory Committee

MINUTES

Wednesday, July 24, 2024, 5:30 p.m.

Open to public attendance in Committee Room G

Lower Level, City Hall

Committee members may attend electronically

PRESENT:

Councillor Tasha Henderson	Chair
Karen Basran	Human Resources Business Partner
Anne Bélanger	Committee Member
Julie Drew	Committee Member
Hazel Fitzpatrick*	Committee Member
Nancy Kato	Committee Member
Vic Leach	Committee Member
Katie Marshall	Committee Member
Karla Olson	Committee Member
Julia Schoennagel (arr. at 7:15pm)	Committee Member
Colleen Vogler	Committee Member

REGRETS:

Councillor Jaimie McEvoy	Chair
Julie Drew	Committee Member
Asifa Lalji	Committee Member

STAFF PRESENT:

Mike Anderson	Manager, Transportation
Hailey Finnigan*	Communications Coordinator, Office of the CAO
Anur Mehdic	Social Planner 2
Carilyn Cook	Committee Clerk, Legislative Services

*Denotes electronic attendance

1. CALL TO ORDER AND LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Councillor Henderson opened the meeting at 5:40 p.m. and recognized with respect that New Westminster is on the unceded and unsurrendered land of the Halkomelem speaking peoples. She acknowledged that colonialism has made invisible their histories and connections to the land. She recognized that, as a City, we are learning and building relationships with the people whose lands we are on.

2. INTRODUCTIONS

Introductions took place.

3. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

MOVED and SECONDED

THAT the Agenda of the July 24, 2024 meeting of the Accessibility Advisory Committee be adopted with the addition of New Business Item 6.1 SCI Climate Forum – Cooling Vest Opportunity by Anur Mehdic, Social Planner 2.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

4. ADOPTION OF MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

4.1 March 27, 2024

MOVED and SECONDED

THAT the March 27, 2024 Minutes of the Accessibility Advisory Committee be adopted as circulated.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

4.2 May 22, 2024

MOVED and SECONDED

THAT the May 22, 2024 Minutes of the Accessibility Advisory Committee be adopted with the following amendments:

- Page 4, line 4 under Challenges it should read, “ there is insufficient parking at Moody Park”;
- Page 4, bullet 11, it should read, “...which is a barrier for some individuals”;

- Page 9, Item 6.2, Accessible Parking Spots Policy, Karla Olson, Committee Member, clarified that she meant to refer to on-street parking. A note will be added to the minutes to refer to when clarification of this was made during the meeting; and
- Page 5, regarding sharing the City of Victoria’s Victoria Day accessibility notice with the Hyack Festival, it was clarified that Councillor Henderson would share the notice with the City of New Westminister’s Special Events Team.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

5. REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS

5.1 Neurodiverse / Autism Communities Decal Project

Hazel Fitzpatrick, Committee Member, shared a PowerPoint presentation titled, “The Neurodiverse/Autistic Decal and Literacy Program.”

In response to questions from the Committee Mx. Fitzpatrick provided the following comments:

- It is believed that this program will improve understanding and patience when assisting people with mental illness or other challenges;
- The cards should be displayed at each person’s discretion as not everyone may be comfortable with it;
- The decals will be distributed to various police departments by the Chief of Police Association, made available at community events, and through the various mental health organizations;
- The four goals were created along with the Pacific Autism Funding Network and other organizations mentioned in the presentation;
- It is unclear how the success of the Project and learning outcomes will be determined and tracked. This information can be shared at a future Committee meeting along with whether or not the Project is being done anywhere else; and
- How Project information will be advertised and shared with shut-ins and those who are not out and about in the community has not yet been discussed; however, this is an essential service and we want as many people as possible to benefit from it;

Discussion ensued and Committee members provided the following comments:

- Work should be done with the Borderline Personality Disorder Society of BC as volunteers are taught to only call the Police as a last resort;
- This could be a valuable part of a family and/or building safety plan and people could put the decal on their door;
- This could be mandatory training for police forces;
- As the new Chair of the New Westminster Police Board, Councillor Henderson could present this mandatory training to the Police Board; and
- The Project information can be shared with the City's new Crisis Response Team, the School Board, New Westminster Fire and Rescue Services, and other organizations such as MOSAIC, etc.

5.2 June 10, 2024 Motion from Council: Accessibility to the Riverfront

Councillor Henderson advised of the June 10, 2024 Council motion in which Council referred the conversation regarding accessibility to the riverfront to the Accessibility Advisory Committee.

She read aloud the motion from Council, as follows:

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the broader conversation of the accessibility of the riverfront be referred to Accessibility Advisory Committee for ongoing discussion.

She advised of the discussion Council had regarding the elevators and how challenging it was to maintain them and keep them in service, noting that the Committee had previously discussed accessibility to events held at the waterfront. She stated that the discussion tonight would be around the physical space of the riverfront.

Councillor Henderson thanked Committee members for sharing their lived experiences during meetings and explained an optional activity for the group to participate in to facilitate the conversation and that would consider voices not represented on the Committee such as English language learners and children.

Councillor Henderson handed out cards to each Committee member that provided an example of a community member, including their age, disability (visible or invisible), their primary mode of transportation, and any barriers they may face including financial. Everyone shared the particulars of their "person" and the Committee provided feedback on accessibility through the lenses of the personas.

Julia Schoennagel, Committee Member, advised of a social media post by Councillor Fontaine where he asked whether community members preferred to celebrate Canada Day at Queen's Park or Pier Park. She noted that she responded to Councillor Fontaine's post, outlining the benefits of Queen's Park versus the barriers/challenges of Pier Park. Ms. Schoennagel will provide the post and responses to the Committee Clerk to share with the Committee.

Discussion ensued and Committee members provided the following comments:

- Signage for crossing the road near the railroad tracks is poor;
- There is a very limited number of accessible parking spots, some of which are located at the far end, near the stairs;
- There needs to be signage alerting people when the elevator is out of order to save them from getting all the way there only to find out it is not working;
- Crossing the short and narrow bridge may be problematic for those afraid of heights, especially if other people are using it at the same time;
- Many people do not attend activities at Pier Park due to its inaccessibility;
- Queen's Park does not have the same accessibility issues as Pier Park;
- Accessibility via public transit to Pier Park is also very challenging as, for example, community buses to get to the Park, are often full by the time they reach Victoria Hill;
- Many people are unaware of the second elevator, located at the River Sky development near the McInnes overpass; and
- At least one of the two elevators should be operating at any given time.

MOVED and SECONDED

THAT Steven Ngo, be invited to participate in the July 24, 2024 meeting of the Accessibility Advisory Committee.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Discussion continued and Committee members provided the following comments:

- Information should be provided in multiple languages and include a google translate button where applicable;
- Single people may not feel safe enough to visit the park on their own, without the company or assistance of someone else;

- Regarding the use of language, icons are being used at the təməsew̓tx̓w Aquatic and Community Centre but many people do not know what they mean;
- Another challenge with accessible parking spots is that someone who is not counting steps, such as a person who is using a mobility aid, may take the parking spot closer to the elevator, leaving a person who does not use a mobility aid but still has mobility challenges, to walk further to the elevator;
- Two accessible parking spots is not enough for when there is an event;
- People may not want to attend an event at the riverfront if seating and/or other accessibility measures are not assured;
- A sign could be put by the stairs to let people know that there is an elevator and where it is located;
- The Q to Q Ferry is not as accessible on the Queensborough side as it is on the mainland side and is only accessible during certain times of the day due to grade of the ramp changing with the tide;
- Provision of accessible parking by stairways does not seem to make sense;
- People riding their scooters and ebikes on sidewalks and on the boardwalk can be an issue as they are quiet and many elderly people have hearing issues;
- It is a challenge to enforce the rules around scooter and ebike use;
- With respect to people with vision loss accessing the riverfront, the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) advises people not to visit the riverfront given the multitude of accessibility issues in the area;
- The City is at the mercy of the elevator companies with respect to the availability of mechanics and parts. In addition, if an elevator is on private property, the owners may not be in a hurry to spend money to have their elevator fixed;
- There are not a lot of shady areas at Pier Park and only one place to purchase cold drinks;
- A large map that shows “You are here” and outlines where things are located would be very helpful, including for those who experience language barriers;
- Language used on signage could represent the highest spoken languages in the City, such as what is used at the Police Station;

- An online printable map on the City's website could show the locations of transit stations, washrooms, benches, and include the distances in both metres and feet. People could visit the library to get a copy printed out;
- Access to the language of your choice, such as what some emergency services offer, would be ideal; and,
- The Welcome Centre at New Westminster Secondary School and Century House both have maps to offer to people.

Anne Bélanger left the meeting at 7:21 p.m.

Councillor Henderson advised that this would be an ongoing conversation and the points made during discussions will go to staff for consideration and follow up.

5.3 Review of the Terms of Reference

Councillor Henderson provided a brief overview of the Accessibility Advisory Committee's Terms of Reference and the Committee's mandate.

6. NEW BUSINESS

6.1 SCI Climate Action Forum – Cooling Vest Opportunity

Anur Mehdic, Social Planner 2, reminded Committee members of the recent and predicted heat events and shared a hand out that contained information regarding the SCI Climate Action Forum Cooling Vest Opportunity which would provide those with health vulnerabilities to heatwaves with free portable cooling devices. He requested that Committee members help to share the information regarding the cooling vest opportunity.

Discussion ensued and Committee members provided the following comments:

- Last year the process to get an air conditioner was very easy;
- A cooling vest would be very beneficial to someone with extreme mobility issues;
- A cooling vest may be a good alternative to an air conditioner as many people are not allowed to have air conditioning units in their apartments;
- Those who are not computer literate may have trouble accessing initiatives such as this;
- Things will be improved through the building code as we move forward such as climate control in suites. As well, there is exciting cooling technology for the built environment that is being explored;

- Skytrains and buses do not have air conditioning on their vehicles; and
- Even if public cooling centres or common rooms are available for people to visit, many do not want to leave their pets or prefer to not be around a lot of people.

Mr. Mehdic noted that the pilot project is being supported by BC Hydro and that people are being encourage to apply for a vest as more can be ordered if they run out. He advised that information on the initiative is being shared with various organizations and through the City's social media accounts.

Councillor Henderson acknowledged that not everyone is permitted to have air conditioners in their apartments and noted that she and Councillor Nakagawa were working to have that changed.

In response to requests from a Committee member, it was noted that it is anticipated that the Draft Accessibility Plan would be coming back to the Committee for a final review with the consultant prior to going to Council. Committee member were reminded that the Plan is a living document and would be updated on a regular basis.

7. **END OF MEETING**

The meeting ended at 7:52 p.m.

8. **UPCOMING MEETINGS**

September 25, 2024
November 27, 2024

Certified correct,

Councillor Tasha Henderson

Carilyn Cook, Committee Clerk



Accessibility Advisory Committee

MINUTES

Wednesday, September 25, 2024, 5:30 p.m.
Open to public attendance in Committee Room G
Lower Level, City Hall
Committee members may attend electronically

PRESENT:

Julia Drew	Alternate Chair
Karen Basran	Human Resources Business Partner
Anne Bélanger*	Committee Member
Vic Leach	Committee Member
Katie Marshall	Committee Member
Karla Olson	Committee Member
Julia Schoennagel	Committee Member

REGRETS:

Councillor Tasha Henderson	
Councillor Jaimie McEvoy	
Hazel Fitzpatrick	Committee Member
Nancy Kato	Committee Member
Asifa Lalji	Committee Member
Colleen Vogler	Committee Member

STAFF PRESENT:

Erica Mark	Manager, Recreation Services and Facilities
Hailey Finnigan	Communications Coordinator, Office of the CAO
Anur Mehdic	Social Planner 2
Carilyn Cook	Legislative Services Assistant/Committee Clerk, Legislative Services
Jasmine Claypool*	Recorder, Raincoast Ventures Ltd.

*Denotes electronic attendance

1. CALL TO ORDER AND LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Julie Drew, Alternate Chair, opened the meeting at 5:40 p.m. and recognized with respect that New Westminster is on the unceded and unsurrendered land of the Halkomelem speaking peoples. She acknowledged that colonialism has made invisible their histories and connections to the land. She recognized that, as a City, we are learning and building relationships with the people whose lands we are on.

Carilyn Cook, Committee Clerk, Legislative Services, read a message of regret from Councillor Henderson.

2. INTRODUCTIONS

None.

3. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA – to add to new business

The following items were added to the agenda by Committee Members:

- Item 6.1 – Access and Inclusion Discussion; and
- Item 6.2 – E-bike discussion

MOVED and SECONDED

THAT the September 25, 2024, agenda of the Accessibility Advisory Committee be adopted as amended.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

4. ADOPTION OF MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

None.

5. REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS

5.1 Queen’s Park Concession Kiosk Accessibility Wording

Erica Mark, Manager of Recreation Services and Facilities, advised of a sign displayed at the Queen’s Park Concession Kiosk that read “Accessibility Challenges – Order Here.” It was noted that the sign was intended to be helpful by directing customers to the lower counter with better accessibility for scooters/wheelchairs.

During ensuing discussion, comments were offered regarding banks that use images, a preference for a combination of an image and text, and a suggestion for staff training to identify customers who would be better served at the lower

counter.

It was decided that both the universal symbol and text be used to identify the lower counter at the Queen's Park Concession Kiosk for priority access.

5.2 Hearing Loop Technology

Erica Mark, Manager of Recreation Services and Facilities, advised of the Hearing Loop Technology currently being piloted at the tēmәsewtx^w Aquatic and Community Centre, noting an interest in expanding the technology into other city locations.

Discussion ensued, during which questions were raised regarding:

- Whether T-coil is standard equipment on a hearing aid; and
- Whether the technology would work for people with cochlear implants.

A suggestion was made to explore staff training opportunities on recognizing hearing challenges, with potential resources including hearing clinics, Fraser Health Authority, and Century House. Anne Bélanger, Committee Member, off to explore options and email the Committee Clerk on the findings.

In response to questions posed during discussion, it was noted that further information was needed.

6. NEW BUSINESS

6.1 Access and Inclusion – Wording Discussion

Karla Olson, Committee Member, invited discussion regarding the wording of the Access and Inclusion statement in the Fall 2024 Active Living Guide (ALG) and suggested a revision, highlighting that “benefits” implies an advantage. The importance of recognizing human rights was also mentioned.

Discussion ensued, and Committee members provided the following comments:

- The “Accessible New West” web page uses the word “benefit” and should be updated to match language in a revised Access and Inclusion statement; and
- Accessibility is a human rights issue and benefits everyone.

Ms. Olson highlighted the communicative purpose of raising awareness about human rights issues and noted concern with the term “universal access” as it was originally linked to universal access to information.

During ensuing discussion, it was noted that the language did not clearly reference the Parks and Recreation Access and Inclusion Committee, and it was acknowledged that the wording should be revised for clarity.

A Committee member commented on the photo featured above the Access and Inclusion statement in the Fall 2024 ALG and noted that the children represent diversity, but there is a lack of disability representation.

In response to a question about how accessibility challenges are linked to the income threshold for financial assistance for registered recreation programs, Erica Mark noted that the Financial Assistance Program and eligibility criteria was being reviewed.

Discussion ensued and Committee members provided the following comments with respect to additional wording concerns:

- Under the “Support Person” heading: “... despite our best efforts, we cannot accommodate all needs or requests due to limitations on equipment, training or funding”; and
- Access & Inclusion: “...is in the final stages of completing a draft Accessibility Plan.”

It was noted that there are eight categories or key focus areas that have been developed to support Provincial Accessibility Plans, and that certain categories are being addressed at a time by the Province, with continual updates bi-annually.

A Committee member suggested that “...is in the final stages of completing a draft Accessibility Plan” be updated to indicate that the City “...is in the final stages of *developing* a draft Accessibility Plan”.

Additional discussion ensued regarding the terms “universal design” and “barrier-free design”, noting that when people with disabilities are prioritized, it also benefits people with strollers and others.

Ms. Olson volunteered to gather Committee members’ feedback and forward recommended wording to Erica Mark by October 10, 2024, so that the opening paragraph under “Access & Inclusion” in the Fall 2024 ALG could be revised.

Additional discussion regarding the Financial Assistance Program for recreation programs ensued, during which it was suggested that income confirmation from the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction be acceptable and that a 50% program contribution is a barrier for some people.

A discussion about whether to highlight people with disabilities ensued, highlighting potential preferred outcomes of raising awareness but noting that it is not always safe or appropriate for everyone. An example was shared of a city employee misunderstanding “universal access” and the need to shift to “universal design”.

6.2 E-bike Discussion

Committee members held a discussion regarding the loss of parking spots due to the conversion of spaces for e-bikes, which are not suitable transportation options for people with disabilities who rely on cars. It was noted that many of the converted spaces were more accessible parking spots.

In addition to safety concerns, including a high number of injuries and lack of helmet use, it was highlighted that there are currently no licensing requirements for e-bikes or e-scooters. E-bikes fall under provincial jurisdiction but are not covered under the *Motor Vehicle Act*.

In response to a question about how the City of New Westminster determines the number and location of accessible parking spaces, Committee members were advised of the procedure for members of the public to address Council on open delegation nights, including five minutes to address Council and potential questions from Council or further response from a specific department.

The need for additional information regarding the accessible parking spots policy and decision-making could be added to the next Committee meeting agenda.

Anne Bélanger departed the meeting at 6:57 p.m., and Carilyn Cook, Legislative Services Assistant/Committee Clerk, advised that quorum had been lost.

Discussion ensued related to e-bikes, and Committee members provided the following comments:

- Suggestion to invite the E-bike Roll-Out Lead to a Committee meeting;
- Ability to contact Lime regarding misplaced bikes;
- Ease of access for children with debit/supplementary credit cards;
- Lack of Canadian data related to injuries/deaths linked to e-bikes or e-scooters; and
- Significantly lower traffic injuries/deaths in Norway compared to British Columbia (BC) while both places have similar populations (examples of

significantly higher fines for traffic law infractions in Norway compared to BC).

Anur Mehdic, Social Planner 2, advised of an application for funding related to updating the “age-friendly community strategy” and possible support of the updates being received from the Committee.

7. **END OF MEETING**

The meeting ended at 7:15 p.m.

8. **UPCOMING MEETINGS**

November 27, 2024.

Certified correct,

Councillor Tasha Henderson

Carilyn Cook, Committee
Clerk/Legislative Services Assistant

City of New Westminster Accessibility Plan



NEW WESTMINSTER



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LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We recognise and respect that New Westminster is on the unceded and unsurrendered land of the Halkomelem speaking peoples. We acknowledge that colonialism has made invisible their histories and connections to the land. As a City, we are learning and building relationships with the people whose lands we are on.

INTRODUCTION

The City of New Westminster is committed to improving and increasing accessibility in our city.

To achieve this vision, the City recognizes the diversity of people's abilities, whether they live with lifelong invisible and visible disabilities, newly acquired conditions, or the changes that can occur over one's lifetime. People in our community can experience a range of life events that heighten their need for accessibility, including managing age-related conditions, children going from strollers to walking, recovering from an accident or surgery, needing mental health support, or assisting in caregiving for people of any age.

By identifying specific actions, this Accessibility Plan helps make sure that our practices, services, and communication are inclusive and accessible for everyone in our community. These actions build on the work of the City to guide staff, council, and community members to identify, eliminate and prevent barriers.

In alignment with the Accessible BC Act (the Act), the City of New Westminster aims to create a culture change that prioritizes "Nothing about us, without us" as an integral component of accessibility. By working closely with members of the disability community, this ensures that the voices and perspectives of people with lived experience are not only heard but also included in the work we do. The City is committed to collaborating with individuals with diverse lived experiences in developing and informing accessibility considerations.

Located along the Lower Fraser River, on the unceded homelands of the Halkomelem speaking people, New Westminster is a diverse city, rich with people from a wide range of lived and living experiences. It has long been a crossroads of people, pathways, and ideas, where innovation and culture are interwoven and celebrated, making this city a great place to live, work, and visit. This diversity is a strength, and the City of New Westminster is committed to fostering an equitable, inclusive and welcoming community that is accessible to all community members, regardless of their ability or disability.

BACKGROUND

Located along the Lower Fraser River, on the unceded homelands of the Halkomelem speaking people, New Westminster is a diverse city, rich with people from a wide range of lived and living experiences. It has long been a crossroads of people, pathways, and ideas, where innovation and culture are interwoven. As a City, we are continually evolving.

Along with this history comes the modern acknowledgement of its role in creating a community that has overlooked the needs of people living with invisible and visible disabilities. They have faced historic challenges, systemic barriers and unconscious bias that have resulted in barriers to meaningful participation that individuals can still face today.

What does disability look like in New West?

In British Columbia, 20.5% of people between the ages of 15 and 64 live with a disability. Three out of four of them report living with more than one. As people age, health related conditions can lead to living with a disability. In B.C., 41.7% of people over the age of 65 live with a disability and our aging population is growing. Estimates for the year 2031 suggest that almost 1 in 4 people in B.C. will be over the age of 65.

By implementing this Accessibility Plan, we look to identify and remove attitudinal, systemic, physical, sensory, information, communication, and technology barriers. We recognize that individuals have diverse identities and lived realities that intersect and affect how they experience barriers and accessibility. Diversity is a strength, and the City of New Westminster is committed to fostering an equitable, inclusive, and welcoming community that is accessible to all visitors and members of our community.

PURPOSE

The Accessible B.C. Act was passed into law in June of 2021 to set up a comprehensive legal framework aimed at identifying, eliminating, and preventing barriers that hinder the full and equitable participation of individuals with disabilities. This groundbreaking legislation marks a significant stride towards genuine accessibility throughout the province.

Under the Accessible B.C. Act, the City is mandated to create an accessibility plan that is regularly updated, at minimum once every three years. The plan's development involved close cooperation and consultation with various government agencies, the disability community, as well as insights brought forward by the Provincial Accessibility Committee.¹

The legislation requires that the City's Accessibility plan must follow these principles:

- Adaptability;
- Collaboration;
- Diversity;
- Inclusion;
- Self-determination; and
- Universal Design.

The purpose of creating Accessibility Plans is to:

- Identify, remove and prevent barriers experienced by people with disabilities and those who have additional access needs when interacting with the City;
- Ensure that New Westminster is a place where people of all abilities, backgrounds and ages are able to fully participate in and contribute to all aspects of community life in the manner of their choosing; and
- Foster a community that recognizes and values the contributions of people with disabilities and collaboratively works to promote accessibility across sectors.²

¹ AccessibleBC: B.C.'s Accessibility Plan 2022/23–2024/25. Government of British Columbia, 2022.

² AccessibleBC: B.C.'s Accessibility Plan 2022/23–2024/25. Government of British Columbia, 2022.

The Accessibility Advisory Committee

As part of the Accessible BC Act, the City established the Accessibility Advisory Committee, (“the Committee”) a Committee of Council. The Committee is chaired by Councilor Jamie with members of the community with a variety of lived experience with disability and barriers to inclusion. The community includes staff liaisons representing a variety of internal departments and collaborating with the City of New Westminster’s police department and library.

The goal and mandate for the Committee is to provide input and direction to the City and Library Board on the development of a City of New Westminster organizational accessibility plan, focusing on three key areas:

- Identifying accessibility and inclusion barriers that City staff and community members experience or may experience in the course of interacting with the City: Employment; Delivery of Service; the Built Environment; Information and Communications; Transportation; and Procurement;
- Developing an organizational accessibility plan; and
- Developing a mechanism for public feedback on accessibility.

The Committee held its first meeting in March of 2023 and continues to meet on a regular basis as they review current practices, standards, and services to assist with continuous learning and improvements. This will be accomplished through recommendations, new standards, and inclusivity measures to support people with a variety of disabilities (both visible and invisible) in order to enhance and develop equitable opportunities to access, participate and contribute to City life.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The City of New Westminster gratefully acknowledges the work and contributions of our staff liaisons and our community members for their contributions to the Committee and to improving accessibility across the City.

Staff Liaisons:

- Councillor Jaimie McEvoy
- Karen Basran, Human Resources Business Partner
- Mike Anderson, Manager of Transportation, Engineering
- Shelly Schnee, Program Coordinator, Seniors, Parks and Recreation (Retired)
- Hailey Finnigan, Communications Officer, Office of the CAO & New Westminster Police Department
- Anur Mehdic, Social Planner, Planning and Development
- Carilyn Cook, Committee Clerk, Legislative Services
- Zaria Alibhai, Coordinator, Public Engagement and Communications
- Christopher Koth, Manager of Programs and Community Development, Library; and
- Erica Mark, Recreation Services and Facilities Manager, Parks and Recreation.

Community Members:

- Anne Belanger
- Taryn Bruckshaw
- Iris Cheng
- Shannon Dolton
- Hazel Fitzpatrick
- Nancy Kato
- Vic Leach
- Susan MacAndrew
- Karla Olson
- Wendy Parry
- Julia Schoennagel
- Julie Drew
- Asifa Lalji
- Katie Marshall
- Colleen Vogler

This Accessibility Plan was created in partnership with the accessibility and universal design consultant team at Meaningful Access Consulting.



MOVING FORWARD

Part of the work going forward includes developing definitions and principles that reflect what accessibility means for the City of New Westminster and the greater community. This includes understanding and addressing seen and unseen barriers, conscious and unconscious biases, and systemic limitations, through conversations, research, audits, partnerships, and outreach.

This initial Accessibility Plan aims to increase active opportunities to enhance inclusion, adaptability, diversity, collaboration, self-determination, and universal design over the next three years.

The overall intent of this initial Plan is to explore and apply various accessibility tools, guidelines and standards, informed by the Accessibility Advisory Committee and the community, to enhance our a) built environment, b) service delivery, c) information and communications, and d) employment in order to prioritize accessibility and inclusion for people of all abilities, ages, cultures, identities and backgrounds.

KEY TERMS

The concepts used to describe accessibility and disability continue to evolve and ever-changing as society grows and develops. Moving from a previous medical model of disability to the current social model, the B.C. Government, defines Accessibility as follows:

“Accessibility means that all people can take part in their communities through work, play and other daily activities.”³

Following are some key terms and their definitions that will be found within this document. A full glossary can be found in the appendix.

Barrier: “Anything that hinders the full and equal participation in society of a person with [a visible or invisible disability]. Barriers can be caused by environments, attitudes, practices, policies, information, communications or technologies, and affected by intersecting forms of discrimination.”⁴

Disability: Means an inability to participate fully and equally in society as a result of the interaction of an impairment and a barrier. Many members of the disability community prefer the term disability, however this is not necessarily the case for everyone, and other terms may be preferable for some members of the community.

Equity: “Equity is the fair treatment and access to equal opportunity (justice) that allows the unlocking of one’s potential, leading to the further advancement of all peoples. The equity pursuit is about the identification and removal of barriers to ensure the full participation of all people and groups.”⁵

Inclusion: “Inclusion is a universal human right and its objective is to accept, welcome and embrace all people irrespective of race, gender, disability, medical or other need. Inclusion consists of the efforts and practices to ensure groups or individuals with different backgrounds are culturally and socially accepted and treated equally.”⁶

Universal Design: “The design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability.”⁷

³ AccessibleBC: B.C.’s Accessibility Plan 2022/23–2024/25. Government of British Columbia, 2022.

⁴ Accessible British Columbia Act. Government of British Columbia, 2021.

⁵ Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility, Canadian Commission for UNESCO, 2021

⁶ What is Inclusion? Inclusion Ontario. 2022

⁷ Centre for Excellence in Universal Design. National Disability Authority, 2020.

OUR ACCESSIBILITY STORY AND PURPOSE

The City of New Westminster recognizes the importance of all our citizens participating in all aspects of community life. As a City that is committed to Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility, we look forward to building on the work that we have already done, and to working collaboratively to make New Westminster a welcoming community to people of all backgrounds, ages and abilities.

New Westminster's Initiatives

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism Framework

In 2022, New Westminster adopted a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism Framework (DEIAR) that seeks to provide the residents of New Westminster with the best possible municipal services reflecting the diverse strengths and needs of the community. That means recognizing and celebrating difference, valuing the contributions made by all current and future staff, identifying power differences linked to social inequities and acting every day to eliminate those inequities.



For the City of New Westminster, the DEIAR Framework is intended to be a starting point for culture shift that aims to work towards equity and a better world for all. The City will work towards becoming a community that supports and fosters a diversity of perspectives and provides equal opportunities for its residents. The aim is for the City to provide programs and services that meet the diverse needs of the community and equally committed to an inclusive workplace that welcomes, respects and values a diverse workforce that reflects the qualities and differences of the broader population it serves.

This Framework also supports the outcomes of the Accessible BC Act and the Accessibility Plan by understanding that diversity and inclusion speak also to the needs of individuals who have disabilities or diverse accessibility needs.

Employment

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion anti-Racism Framework (DEIAR)

Through a collaboration with LevelUp Planning and Consulting, we conducted city-wide research through various consultation strategies to develop and implement a Diversity, Equity,

Inclusion, and Anti-Racism (DEIAR) Framework for the City, including the Police and Library Boards.

The framework includes next step recommendations, toolkits, and resources to ensure there are opportunities to review current practices, obtain different perspectives and incorporate equitable options to enhance inclusivity and diversity through learning and training.

Recruitment and Hiring Practices

Through the development of the DEIAR framework, the Human Resources Department has been working in conjunction with hiring managers to review and update our current recruitment strategies to include a diversity statement, reviewing postings for inclusive language and adopting alternate strategies to enhance the recruitment process such as offering virtual interviews, providing interview questions in advance and providing feedback to candidates.

The Human Resources department has the ability to offer virtual and in-person interviews as well as has a separate, accessible, entrance to City Hall.

We work with various post-secondary institutions to explore co-op learning opportunities as well as establish long-term partnerships. We conduct outreach to form and deepen relationships with diverse organizations including local agencies, post-secondary institutions and return-to-work program providers.

Taleo

The Human Resources Department for the City uses the software known as Taleo for its recruitment and onboarding of employees. This software, which is mobile-friendly (adding to its accessibility), allows for job seekers to be more organized, receiving alerts and being able to enable automatic uploading of resumes and forms being completed. Internally, it allows for a greater information sharing as to what roles candidates have applied for and where they may be well-suited.

Community Action Network (CAN)

In 2019 the City of New Westminster partnered with the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition on a unique project called the Community Action Network (CAN), through which people with lived and living experience share their perspectives to support with planning and policy development. This enduring partnership is intended to ensure:

- That planning and policy development processes are inclusive of all community members, including those with lived experiences in poverty and homelessness;

- That barriers to meaningful engagement are identified and addressed;
- That people with lived and living experience are acknowledged as subject matter experts and compensated accordingly; and,
- That plans and policies are more responsive to the diversity of community needs.

In 2023, the City was awarded the Gold Award for Excellence in Planning Practice – City & Urban Areas from the Planning Institute of British Columbia (PIBC) for its Community Action Network.

Recreation and Health

Access and Inclusion Program

New Westminister's Parks and Recreation Access and Inclusion program aims to remove barriers to participation in our programs and facilities, offering financial assistance, and consistently providing free and low-cost activities.

The City is proud to work with community partners to match funding, staff or volunteers to help customers that need support to participate in our programs one on one, based on availability.

Healthier Communities Committee

The Healthier Community Partnership Committee is a health promotion initiative to encourage the community to *EAT WELL, BE ACTIVE, AND LIVE TOBACCO-FREE*. It is a three-way partnership between the City of New Westminister, Fraser Health, and School District No. 40 and looks at the preventable risk factors of chronic disease - specifically nutrition, physical activity, tobacco and the built environment (e.g. how neighbourhood design affects our health). The focus is on education, programming and policy recommendations to ensure lasting behaviour change and better health for all.

Access Tickets

The Access Tickets initiative provides bulk sales to pre-approved qualifying Social Service agencies that offer mental health residential or transitional services in New Westminister. We have established partnerships with these agencies and they in turn dispense the Access Tickets that provide a 50% discount on admission fees to their clients.

Facility Accessibility Audits

In 2022, our recreation centres received accessibility audits for staff to better understand the current state of accessibility within our facilities as well as the areas of improvement that would make a positive impact for the disability community. We are continuing to improve accessibility in our facilities and building to higher accessibility standards in the future.



The tāmāsew̄tx^w Aquatic and Community Centre

The tāmāsew̄tx^w Aquatic and Community Centre is a multi-year project that is scheduled to open in 2024. The City is working with Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification professionals to ensure it is built to a universal design best practice. The facility will feature accessible parking spaces, pools with a range of access types including beach and ramped entry, intermittent and dispersed seating, accessible showers and changing facilities, as well as a range of fitness equipment that is designed to accommodate users with a variety of abilities.

Information, Communications and Technology

To ensure equitable access to information, the City uses a variety of ways of communicating with the public including both digital and print formats as well as social media and traditional media opportunities. The City offers digital newsletters, a City Calendar of Events, web content, is active on social media (YouTube, Facebook, X and Instagram) and shares information regularly using digital billboards, reports, posters and advertising in local new publications.

We are working to integrate digital accessibility best practices and currently have closed captions enabled on our YouTube videos with some pertinent videos including hard or embedded captions. We strive to include photos that demonstrate diversity and inclusion as well as use plain language in our publications.

Be Heard New West

Be Heard New West is the City's online community engagement platform is an accessible public engagement tool. The website offers a number of ways for people to contribute feedback and meets WCAG standards.

Committees of Council and Council Meetings

The Social Inclusion, Engagement and Reconciliation Advisory Committee, formed in 2021 was a Committee of Council, whose mandate included supporting and facilitating social equity and inclusion for under-recognized groups and vulnerable populations and implementing the City's

Public Engagement Strategy and develop public engagement tools and practices that are accessible to and reflective of the entire community.

The City holds hybrid Council meetings and workshops which allow people options for attending committee meetings and engagement opportunities in ways that work well for them. With support from Councilor McEvoy, we are working to better understand how to increase accessibility of our various meeting rooms, particularly from an auditory disability perspective.

Digital Technology Program

The City partners with the Purpose Society to donate devices that have completed their use cycle by City employees to elevate digital accessibility for those with financial barriers.

Getting around the City

The City has installed curb letdowns, accessible pedestrian signals (APS), and improved pedestrian crossings across New Westminster to enhance safety and accessibility. There are also a variety of accessible design examples within our City, such as Tactile Walking Surface Indicators (TWSIs) along the Agnes Greenway, universally designed picnic tables at the Victoria Hill Play Space and Moody Park, improved accessible parking at Moody Park Arena, and improved pathways in Riverside Park.



Signalized Intersections Policy

This policy outlines best practices for consistency in the design and installation of traffic signals and crosswalks that are focused on pedestrian convenience, comfort, and accessibility with a central emphasis on addressing accessibility barriers for people using streets networks.

Improvements and Enhancements to Bylaws

The *Subdivision and Development Control Bylaw* was recently updated to outline how private developers can ensure that new public infrastructure is accessible. It includes details regarding construction materials, measurements and other factors that need to be considered. As well, the updated Zoning Bylaw includes provisions for off-street accessible parking in new developments.

City of New Westminster Design Criteria

The criteria laid out in Bylaws 8128 and 8369 specify that these design criteria are considered to be a minimum standard and designers are encouraged to seek superior solutions as appropriate. These criteria reflect many of the best practices put out by the Canadian

Standards Association for accessibility such as the design of curb cuts, widths and materiality for sidewalks and lighting levels when developing City infrastructure.

[Agnes Greenway Project](#)

The Agnes Greenway Project was a major capital project to enhance pedestrian and cyclist safety along Agnes Street and includes features such as a raised crosswalk, raised intersectins, Tactile Walking Surface Indicators (TWSIs), accessible loading zones and additional street furniture such as benches.

[New Westminster Police Department \(NWPD\)](#)

The New Westminster Police Department has a new accessibility landing page that offers insights on how to get to the building and the building's accessibility features allowing for community members be aware of how the building may might their needs if police services are required. Overall, the police have demonstrated a commitment to identifying access barriers through community input, and developing solutions. While constrained by resources, they are working to make gradual improvements through both small and large changes.

[Training](#)

Recruits at the Justice Institute of British Columbia receive training on how to serve people with apparent and non-apparent disabilities, including autism spectrum disorder, as well as mental health disabilities including Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, Schizophrenia and Schizo-Affective Disorder. Officers also receiving training through the Deaf Wellbeing Program. Officers are trained to adapt and use creative problem solving as needed. The NWPD uses these trainings and other ongoing trainings to ensure that officers are confident and comfortable in providing community members with respectful and dignified interactions.

[E-COMM 9-1-1](#)

E-COMM 9-1-1 provides support with some of the non-emergency call taking and offers translation services in over 200 languages.

[Mental Health](#)

The New Westminster Police Department has had a Mental Health Unit since 2013. Working closely with community partners (mental health clinicians, probation officers, forensics, crown counsel and other service providers) strategies are developed to support and reduce a client's incidents of crisis. As a result, citizens of New Westminster receive the support they need, further reducing their reliance on emergency service providers such as police, ambulance and hospitals.

The New Westminister Police Department has a close working relationship with the Peer Assisted Care Team (PACT). PACT is an alternative or auxiliary response to police intervention, providing crisis support that focuses on prevention, health and well-being. Front line police officers and the Mental Health Unit speak to community members about PACT and their services on an ongoing basis.

The Built Environment

The New Westminister Police Department building has a number of accessible features including a lift, lowered counters and some available seating with many plans to provide improvements to improve accessibility of the space. The NRPD is looking at ways to improve or replace the current lift, offer a greater range of seating and explore the ability to install power doors for the entrance and washrooms. The department is also looking at installing a second reports phone inside the accessible entrance which not only would increase accessibility overall, but another reports phone would allow more than one person to file a police report at a time with privacy and independence.

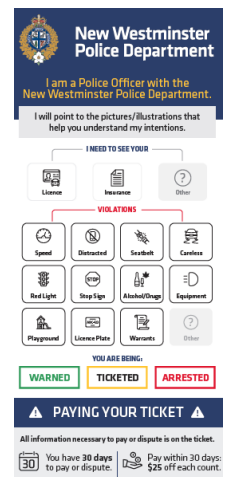


Communications and Information Sharing

A newly developed accessibility webpage outlines what all visitors to the police department can expect when they make a visit. Information about accessibility is now being provided for large-scale police organized public events. On the NRPD’s website people can read about accessibility as it relates to upcoming NRPD events such as Soccer School. Information provided on this website includes: Accessible washrooms, transit, entrances, viewing platforms, and places to seek refuge from the heat. The webpage includes a text-based description and photos, featuring ALT-text of the entry, parking and lobby for individuals. The NRPD uses Youtube’s caption feature as well as offers hard coded captions on the short form videos.

The NRPD communicates the different options available to people including: 9-1-1, non-emergency line, online reporting, attending the police department in person, and email. Additionally, we share share E-Comm’s information about the text to 9-1-1 service which is offered in New Westminister (users must register to use this service).

The NRPD has developed a rack card that allows an officer to use symbols and pointing to communicate with someone who may not speak English as a first language or who may have a cognitive or hearing disability. The cards are available to officers and are now found in all police vehicles including patrol cars and motorcycles.



Employment

The New Westminster Police Disability Management Policy provides a framework for supporting both sworn and civilian employees with health situations impacting their ability to attend work regularly and/or perform their regular job duties. The policy outlines the responsibilities of the NWPD in creating and maintain an inclusive and accessible workplace in which employees can make meaningful and productive work contributions as well as the accommodation process.

New Westminster Public Library

The City Library provides access to collections, services and programs free of charge to residents of New Westminster through both our Main and Queensborough branches. The library operates a Home Library Service for those experiencing challenges using print materials, as well as other challenges that make it difficult to access the library in person. This service also includes free loan of audiobook devices equipped with text-to-speech technology, access to the Centre for Equitable Library Access's (CELA) extensive audiobook collection, as well as access to digital materials available from the National Network for Equitable Library Service (NNELS).

In addition, the library's team of community librarians work directly outside the walls of the library to meet individuals 'where they are', identifying and addressing visible and invisible barriers to library services in support of the library's strategic goal of inclusive access for all.

Programs

In order to begin addressing invisible accessibility needs, the library has recently begun adding materials such as 'sensory kits' for those living with neurodiversity. These kits contain noise-canceling headphones, sunglasses, reusable writing pads, weighted blankets, adjustable bouncy seats, as well as fidget toys and stress balls. The library has also begun to provide a number of core information materials such as a 'Welcome Brochure' in a number of different languages other than English, as well as deploying a translation option for content available via the library website.

The library works closely with the Canadian National Institute for the Blind to best understand the low vision experience and to review ways for the library services to be more inclusive of persons who are blind or experience low vision.

Accessible Computer Station

Equipment and software have been purchased to install an accessible computer station in the library with the intention of creating a workstation that can meet the needs of a variety of community members with disabilities including those who are blind or experience low vision as well as those using



mobility devices. The station will feature a range of adaptive equipment including a height-adjustable computer table to be available in the summer of 2024.

Technology and Communications

The library is also continuing to introduce hybrid programming options that will allow residents the choice to attend programs in person or virtually, depending upon their preference. Throughout 2024 the library website will start to introduce increased accessibility options to enhance the effectiveness of screen reading technology.

Our Building

The library is reviewing ways to renew its interior spaces to be more welcoming and functional for a diverse range of emerging needs, incorporating key principles of Universal Design as a part of that process.

Alignment with Current Strategies and Plans

New Westminster's Official Community Plan (OCP)

New Westminster's Official Community Plan highlights accessibility directly in the transportation and accessibility section but also has goals that speak to the needs of individuals with disabilities directly. The Plan's first goal is to be an equitable, inclusive, safe place where all community members have opportunities to contribute, while feeling connected and accepted. It speaks to diverse housing choice, excellent programs and being a liveable city, all elements that speak to the needs of all residents, regardless of ability. It acknowledges that social and physical accessibility to civic amenities, infrastructure and services is key to achieving community and individual wellbeing.

The OCP highlights that the public realm should be accessible to all with accessibility being a guiding principal of excellent urban design. It acknowledges that urban design extends to creating complete streets and neighborhoods that create a more livable community for people of all ages and abilities.

The OCP includes Development Permit Areas with guidelines to address how buildings combine with streets and public spaces to create unique, attractive places that fit and include accessibility. Additionally, it speaks to the partnership and collaboration with TransLink to provide accessible and complete public transportation networks.



Walking routes need to be accessible for people with walkers and scooters.

Council Strategic Priorities

The Accessibility Plan strategically aligns with the Council Strategic Priorities Plan (2023-2026), which includes five areas of focus, with Community Building and Connection being a central focal point. The other focus areas include Asset Management and Infrastructure, Homes and Housing Options, People-Centered Economy, and Safe Movement of People.

*A vibrant,
compassionate,
resilient city where
everyone can thrive.*

The outcomes of the plan speaks directly to many of the needs of the disability community including:

- Belonging and Connectedness;
- Greater Awareness and Appreciation;
- New and Growing Connections;
- City Services Alignment and Support;
- Addressing Homelessness;
- Affordable Housing;
- High quality jobs;
- Strategic Infrastructure Investments;
- Culture Change; and
- Sustainable Service Delivery.



Collectively, we strive to recognize, inspire, and empower all residents by developing and nurturing relationships with and across communities. We recognize identities and values to support the development of welcoming, respectful, and inclusive processes, activities, and spaces and places. The social and cultural make-up of New Westminster has fundamentally changed and is more diverse now more than ever, and it is vital that we all foster a community in which everyone feels they belong.

Master Transportation Plan (MTP) & Neighbourhoods Plans

The Master Transportation Plan & Neighbourhood Plans are overarching long-term plans for transportation in New Westminster that prioritize sustainable modes of transportation (walking/wheeling, cycling, transit) and call for improved sidewalk accessibility and integrating principles of Universal Design.

The MTP provides long-term direction that will guide transportation policies, priorities and investments within each element of the transportation network over the next 25 years. It relates directly to increasing accessibility by creating a walkable community that ensures walking is a safe, convenient and universally accessible way to get around the city and by providing attractive and convenient transit for trips within the city and region. “The focus of the City’s efforts to create a walkable city will be on making walking a safe, comfortable, accessible and pleasant mobility choice for people of all ages and abilities, be they residents or visitors.” The document highlights the need for curb cuts, accessible pedestrian signals, countdown timers and ensuring that sidewalks remain free and clear of barriers. Lighting is also a primary point of consideration.

The MTP will be updated within the next few years, with the opportunity to be more explicit about accessibility, particularly as it relates to transit.

Through the MTP, the City aims to have 100% of its public bus stops as accessible with the intention of creating a universally accessible transit system.

New Westminister’s Age and Ability Friendly Community Strategy

The City was officially recognized as an Age-Friendly British Columbia (AFBC) community in 2018. Ahead of its successful application to become an AFBC community, the City developed an Age-Friendly Community Strategy. This strategy proactively addresses present and future needs associated with an aging population and supports a vision of the City as a welcoming, inclusive and accessible community in which older adults and seniors can continue to lead fulfilling, involved and meaningful lives.

With over half of News Westminister Seniors reporting a disability and many more experiencing even temporary disabilities or accessibility barriers, an Age Friendly Community Strategy also directly helps support the disability community as a whole, especially as the principles of the strategy reflect an accessible, inclusive, engaged and respectful community.

The strategy speaks directly to accessibility in the Built Environment and also includes a Transportation focus area, directly aligning with an Accessibility Plan: “Buildings, parks and open spaces, and transportation systems must be accessible, comfortable and safe to build trust and confidence in the built environment. Removing barriers that prevent connections between “home” and the larger “community” will increase the mobility and independence of seniors, while promoting health and well-being.”

The City is planning to update its Age and Ability Friendly Community Strategy.

New Westminster Dementia-Friendly Community Action Plan

A Dementia-Friendly Community Action Plan was developed in conjunction with the Alzheimer's Society in February of 2016, which included creating a framework through a project working group, survey, and literature review.

A Dementia-Friendly Community is one that aligns with universal design best practices and is highlighted throughout the document: "A dementia-friendly community is defined by both its physical and social characteristics. Physical characteristics include accessible public bathrooms, clear and legible signage, distinctive structures and landmarks for orientation and way-finding, and welcoming and inclusive civic facilities, open spaces and parks. Social characteristics include recognizing that people with dementia are more than their diagnosis and that dementia can affect a person's cognition, behaviour, emotions and physical capabilities (Alzheimer Society of B.C., 2015)."

Public Engagement Policy and Public Engagement Strategy

Public engagement is based on the principle that those impacted by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process. The City of New Westminster understands that public engagement builds trust and connection with residents and community members and implements the principles of public engagement which include that of diversity and accessibility and inclusion, specifically, that public engagement includes accessibility for all community members, recognizes their right to participate and values the knowledge and experience they contribute.

- Venues, language and communications channels are assessed for their accessibility when planning public engagement initiatives;
- Planning for public engagement initiatives includes concrete steps to mitigate barriers to participation; and
- Participants are offered multiple channels and formats to engage for different abilities and learning styles.

Community Poverty Reduction Strategy

The Community Poverty Reduction Strategy incorporates a five-year action plan and is based on extensive research and a comprehensive community consultation process, including with those with lived experiences. It focuses on families living in poverty and with low incomes but recognizes that families reside in communities. The strategy acknowledges the intersectionality with disability and highlighted the need for greater awareness of programs and services available as well as the financial barriers faced by the community to access quality recreation programming. It also highlights the importance of employment in the community.

New Westminster Child and Youth Friendly Community Strategy

New Westminster adopted the New Westminster Children's Charter, based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) which includes a number of focus, including:

- Creating accessible, inclusive and safe neighbourhoods;
- Maintaining a healthy, natural and sustainable environment; and
- Facilitating involvement and participation regardless of ability, age, culture or income.

- **CONNECTIVITY:** Healthy streets connect places where people live, play, shop and work. Pedestrians, cyclists and wheelchair users should have more than one route to get to their destinations.
- **DIVERSITY OF PEOPLE AND ACTIVITIES:** Healthy streets have a diversity of people ranging from children to seniors. Healthy streets have people engaged in different activities, including sidewalk café dining, sitting on benches, strolling, visiting with friends, walking dogs and window shopping.
- **MOVEMENT CHOICES:** Healthy streets allow for a diversity and co-existence of movement. The streets support people who want to walk, cycle, use transit or drive to their destinations.

FOCUS AREAS

The City of New Westminster's inaugural Accessibility Plan focus areas align with those put forward by the Accessible BC Act and include accessibility in the Built Environment, Employment, Information Technology and Communications, City Programs and Services, Transportation, and Procurement and Financial Services.

Built Environment

Physical access in the built environment is important for everyone to create thriving, inclusive cities as it directly impacts the places where people live, work and play. The Built Environment includes City operated parks and open spaces, sidewalks and roads, and civic facilities, including libraries, recreation centres, arenas, trails and dog-parks.

Physical access looks at how people can walk or wheel through the City, interact with City facilities independently and safely and effectively navigate the environment to participate in the spaces and places the City offers for residents and visitors alike.

Employment

As a major employer in the region, the City has an important role in promoting inclusive hiring practices and workplace accessibility. This creates opportunities for people with disabilities and diverse backgrounds to contribute their perspectives as valued members of the City's workforce. By ensuring hiring processes are welcoming and accommodations are available, the City can support each candidate and employee to fully participate and thrive throughout their employment journey. An accessible and inclusive workplace benefits the City through new insights and talents while reflecting the community it serves.

Information, Technology & Communication

As technology advances, there are more opportunities and ways for individuals to obtain information and participate in community discussions. Ensuring accessible information formats and diversity in communication methods is imperative in improving the access to information for everyone.

When looking at access to Information, Technology and Community printed, digital, and in-person communication, closed captioning, interpreters, alternative methods of communication, accessible websites and PDFs should be considered.

Programs and Services

The City wants to make sure all community members can participate fully in all the programs and services that New Westminster has to offer. By taking a proactive approach to identify and remove barriers, the City can make its wide range of programs, services, events, and facilities more welcoming and inclusive over time. This means people with disabilities won't have to be excluded or needing to arrange last-minute accommodations.

Whether it's paying bills, using parks and recreation programs, attending special events, or accessing any City service, the goal is for accessibility to be built in from the start. The more accessible the City's offerings, the easier it is for all residents to take part in community life.

Transportation

Transportation around the City is an integral part of community life. It is important that we look to meet the diverse needs of New Westminster residents, whether it's utilizing active transportation such as walking or wheeling, taking a bus, driving your own vehicle or taking a taxi or ride-hail vehicle.

The City is responsible for most streets and sidewalks within New Westminster, traffic signals, street parking and city-owned parking lots, snow removal at these locations and civic facilities, and the partnership with TransLink for public transportation services.

Procurement & Financial Services

Procurement is the act of finding and acquiring goods and services for the City to support its daily operations. The aim of accessible procurement is to not only ensure the City works with contractors that deliver products or services at the right time, right price and best cost, but also includes accessibility and universal design in the bidding and proposal process.⁸

Taking an accessibility-oriented approach to the policies, practices, and decision-making processes of an organization is essential to advancing accessibility in the City. By incorporating accessibility into the organizational structure, it promotes an inclusive, diverse, and fair workplace and corporate culture.

Recommended Actions

Interdepartmental

1. Establish a baseline for understanding City's current state and capacity for advancing accessibility.
2. Determine a reporting structure for accessibility in addition to the annual report to Council. There is an opportunity to ensure that projects and plans being brought forward include an accessibility lens before being brought to Council. Consider how the Accessibility Advisory Committee may play a role in offering recommendations and consultation so that the Plan outcomes are being integrated into the greater work being done by the City.
3. Develop a budget and financial plan to integrate accessibility across departments to remediate and prevent barriers to access City-wide.
4. Revise emergency management plans to include the perspectives of persons with disabilities including safe exit from civic facilities, activations of reception centres and

⁸ Procurement. Business Development Bank of Canada.

ensuring that the ESS supplier list includes services that offer accessible accommodations.

5. Review opportunities for community outreach to better understand the City's current state of accessibility and the barriers that residents and community members face when interacting with City facilities, programs or services.
6. Review opportunities to use plain language in meeting minutes and public-facing documents.
7. Align accessibility initiatives across City departments with ongoing sharing of the work being accomplished or piloted from an accessibility perspective.

Built Environment

8. Develop an actionable plan to address the accessibility recommendations outlined in the reports from the accessibility audits and implement the changes based on the action plan and budget to remediate and remove barriers to access in a prioritized way.
9. Complete an accessibility audit of remaining facilities including the libraries, police department and City Hall.
10. Review grants designed to upgrade accessibility services in City facilities to enact the recommendations outlined in the audits and communicate outwards to the community the new features and accessibility improvements completed.
11. NWPD to continue working with City staff to explore options for installing power doors and necessary signage on the entrance and washrooms of the NWPD building.
12. Develop a strategy to include universally designed equipment in the replacement of fitness equipment, park infrastructure and playground equipment.
13. Consider leveraging the work being done by the Intermunicipal Committee and their work in developing Enhanced Accessibility Design Guidelines to promote meaningful access and design for transportation infrastructure. These guidelines can also be provided to developers to supplement the current Design Guidelines and increase accessibility across the City.
14. Explore opportunities to include an accessibility outreach package for developers which includes high level accessibility information that supports universal design and accessibility such as wayfinding and built environment best practices.

Employment

15. Include accessibility and accommodation in the diversity statement. An example of an accommodation statement would be: "Accommodations are available throughout the recruitment process and while working at the City of New Westminster. If you require support applying online because you are a person with a disability, please contact us by

phone or email. We welcome the opportunity to discuss accommodations and ensure fairness in our hiring process.”⁹

16. Develop a training plan that includes inclusive hiring training for managers and integrated disability awareness training for all public-facing staff members. Integrate disability awareness training into the onboarding process for all new hires.
17. Create a consistent conversation with hiring managers for screening candidates who declared a disability and ensure those candidates are viewed and considered.
18. Foster ways to increase employee self-declarations for diversity and inclusion to both explain the importance of declaring and update employee representation.
19. Seek ways to empower first responders with additional awareness training including, but not limited to autism, dementia and disability awareness training.
20. Consider ways to expand the current DEIAR Framework to also include accessibility and the intersectionality of disability as this framework has already been widely adopted within the City’s departments.
21. Work with disability service organizations and City staff who have disabilities to develop and implement a workplace accommodation process during recruitment, onboarding, and retention of new and existing employees.
22. Consider developing a video that provides potential candidates information on the hiring and onboarding process.
23. Survey City of New Westminster employees for interest in creating an Employee Resource Group (ERG) for employees with disabilities.

Information, Technology & Communication

24. Captions, Alt-text and Plain Language: Create a communications procedure or guideline to ensure that all new webpages or webpages being updated include captions on videos, alt-text and plain language as a matter of process. All newly uploaded videos should have at least closed captions enabled on YouTube as an interim step until hard coded captions is a matter of practice. Social media posts should also include ALT-text.
25. Public Engagement: Leverage the Seniors Engagement Toolkit and expand upon it to create an inclusive and accessible toolkit for engagement that highlights accessibility best practices in both digital engagement and in-person activities.
26. Refine public engagement procedures to ensure that the public engagement process is accessible and ensuring the inclusion of targeting outreach to include the disability community during the engagement process.
27. Explore the possibility of offering an honorarium or contribution of gratitude for providing lived expertise, for members of task forces and committees.

⁹ Adapted from the Vancouver Airport Authority’s accommodation statement, accessibleemployers.ca

28. Develop a policy for the hiring of American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters for special events, announcements and important information dissemination from the City.
29. Develop a communications plan to highlight accessibility initiatives, current projects and achievements of the City to further elevate accessibility and the disability community as well as demonstrate the 'wins' to help build trust and transparency.
30. Implement consistent and inclusive language use: Simplify language, particularly on external facing documents and resources such as the website and add informational content on accessible features and programs. Ensure that features are descriptive and using disability-friendly terminology (See appendix), limited the use of overly medical jargon, restrictive or redundant.
31. Update the information provided about New Westminster's parks, community centres and pools to include tangible information as to what features are available for users. Providing descriptions on what features exist is much more inclusive than labelling something as "Accessible" or "Fully Accessible." For example: Moody Park Outdoor Pool features changerooms with benches and a variety of lockers heights, a wheel-in shower with a fold-down bench and grab bars and ramped entry into the pool with an available aquatic wheelchair.
This information should be found on the accessibility webpage as well as the individual facility webpages.
32. Develop a photo bank of people with diverse disabilities and abilities from the community to be included in communications materials.
33. Develop a process for fielding questions or concerns related to accessibility. One suggestion may be to have a designated person or to create a living document that offers the breadth of accessible resources across the City, available for front-desk clerks and the City's call-centre.
34. Review current communications from the City, ensuring that communications methods include both print and digital offerings and including the use of new and legacy media channels.
35. Develop a communications plan to communicate to the community the current accessibility offerings and integrate this plan into ongoing event communications and when programs or facilities have been upgraded such as when sensory friendly kits are made available and what they include.

Programs and Services

36. Create "accessibility kits": Offering additional supports for facilities and programs could be as simple as loanable kits that amplify accessibility for a user. For example, an inclusive fitness kit might include tools and equipment that can help someone modify a piece of equipment or exercise such as "active hands" and weightlifting hooks. An

inclusive art kit could include wide handled paint brushes, ergonomic scissors, or an extender for chalk. A sensory friendly kit would include noise-cancelling headphones, fidget toys and sensory toys. (A sensory kit is also a great idea to include for lead fire engines and available at the police department.)

- a. Develop a communications plan to inform the public of the availability of these kits and instructions to staff on how to loan them out to the public when requested.
 - b. Integrate the already existing kits at the library into other programs offered such as the outdoor programming offered by librarians.
37. Consider the development of an adapted recreation plan that aligns with the current strategic plan but also provides insights on the adaptive and inclusive programs available to the public and creates an overall strategy for offering accommodations and communications on accessible and inclusive programming.
 - a. Review opportunities for more inclusive and accessible program offerings to better address the recreational and leisure needs of persons with disabilities.
 - b. Increase the number of and deepen partnerships with disability service organizations to better offer programs, coordinate volunteering opportunities and apply for grants that would expand services for people with disabilities across the City.
38. Review City events plans and develop a process to include accessibility best practices such as elevated viewing platforms, accessible toilets, maps, parking, rest areas that include seats, and ASL interpretation.
39. Expand the availability of other formats/alternative book formats for current collections including large print and audio books.
40. Review current library programs and plans with accessibility as a lens and review the opportunities for accessibility to be named and highlighted in the next iteration of the library strategic plan.
41. Review and investigate the current barriers to accessing community services including the recreation, leisure, cultural and library programs and develop a plan to progressively address the identified barriers.
42. The library will complete the installation of the accessible computer station and will develop a communications plan to inform the community and particularly those with disabilities of the availability of this new resource. Direct communications with organizations such as the Canadian National Institute for the Blind is highly recommended.

Transportation

43. Continue working toward the City of New Westminster's Master Transportation Plan goals and implementing recommendations related to accessibility and universal design while consulting with the disability community on prioritization of initiatives.
 - a. 1.2 Address barriers to walking cycling, transit and ride-sharing within the community.
 - b. 3.3 Serve transportation needs for persons of all abilities.
 - c. 4.3 Provide transportation system that connect the City's diverse neighbourhoods.
44. Continue to implement bus stop accessibility improvements on an ongoing basis, with a goal that all bus stops that can be made accessible (accepting that some bus stop locations are too steep to be considered accessible) are designated as such by TransLink and Coast Mountain Bus Company. Where active mobility lanes pass by island platform ("floating") bus stops, incorporate universal design features consistent with current local guidelines.
45. With new and/or upgraded signals and enhanced crosswalks, apply the City's signalized intersections policy.
46. Retrofit intersections with Accessible Pedestrian Signals over time, with input from community members on prioritization.
47. As part of a broader review of curbside management, review the City's approach to accessible parking, including the number and distribution of stalls, design (width, access aisle and curb cut), time limits, and pricing (for both permits and hourly paid parking).
48. Remain attuned to and follow current best practices for the installation of Tactile Walking Surface Indicators (TWSIs) at intersections and crossings.

Procurement & Financial Services

49. Review opportunities for including accessible housing in affordable housing developments and strategies.
50. Review the opportunity to include accessible and universal design language in the procurement process so that an accessibility lens is applied to the review of all proposals.

Appendix 1: Resources

Accessible British Columbia Act

- [Legislation](#)
- [Plain Language Summary](#)

ASL Interpreters

- [Language Linx](#) ASL Interpreting

Built Environment Canadian Best Practices

- [CSA B651:23 Accessible Design for the Built Environment](#)
- [City of Richmond Enhanced Accessibility Guidelines](#) is a document created internally by the City of Richmond to enhance accessibility in their facilities. Note, this guideline is currently being updated so isn't the most current version.

Communications

- [Accessibility Features of Microsoft Teams](#) Making Teams meetings more accessible.
- [Inclusive Design for Social Media](#) offers best practices from the Hootsuite team.
- [Hemmingwapp](#) is a website that offers tools to help writers be aware of the language level of their writing and provides suggestions on how to simplify the language into plain English.
- [Learn Accessibility](#) A free course on web accessibility (a11y) best practices
- [Microsoft 365 Accessibility Features](#) Support for making Word, PowerPoint and Excel documents more accessible.
- [Playground Communication Boards](#) inclusive play with our playground communication boards, expertly designed by speech pathologists to bridge the communication gap for children of all abilities
- [Zoom](#) Making Zoom more accessible.

Emergency Preparedness

- [Inclusive Emergency Planning](#) includes resources for individuals as well as communities
- [Clearing our Path \(CNIB\) Emergency Exits and Safety](#) provides information on emergency planning that includes the perspectives of people who are blind.
- [PreparedBC](#) Resources for People with Disabilities

Grants

- [Disability Alliance of BC](#) DABC grants These grants are for community-based projects focusing on one of the prescribed service areas to increase accessibility for people with disabilities.

- [Enabling Accessibility Fund](#) provides funding for projects that make Canadian communities and workplaces more accessible for persons with disabilities.
- [Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification Training](#) Tuition grants for individuals to take the RHFAC training to be able to fully audit the built environment.
- [Sparc BC](#) has launched the Local Community Accessibility Grant Program. This program is designed to support persons with disabilities by funding the removal of barriers identified by local governments Accessibility Committees, feedback mechanisms or Accessibility Plans.

Inclusive Employment

- [Hire for Talent](#) provides resources to help employers tap into the talent pool of people with disabilities during their search for skilled workers. They offer a free employer toolkit with resources on the hiring process, providing accommodations, customized employment and more.
- [Managers Guide to Reasonable Accommodation](#): provides guidance to BC Public Service managers and supervisors for employee accommodations.
- [The Neil Squire Society](#) services are designed to assist individuals to stay in the workforce or re-enter the workforce with suitable workplace accommodations and technologies.
- [The Presidents Group](#) is a B.C. based network of 25 change-driven BC business leaders who are champions for more accessible, inclusive workplaces. They provide free inclusive hiring training courses as well as downloadable resources created by employers for employers.

Public Engagement

- [Ontario Municipal Social Services Association Guide for Public Engagement](#) provides guidance on ensuring the public engagement process is accessible for people of all abilities including how to embed the process of accessible public engagement into engagement strategies.

Training

- [Accessible Spaces 101](#) On completion of the course, participants will understand how people with disabilities interact with the built environment, to communicate in a respectful and inclusive manner, and to apply universal design principles to designing, operating, and delivering services in physical spaces.

Universal Design

- [Rick Hansen Foundation Tip Sheets](#)
- [Rick Hansen Foundation – A Guide to Creating Accessible Play Spaces](#)
- [Rick Hansen Foundation – Let’s Play Toolkit](#)

- [Rick Hasen Foundation – Let’s Play: Inclusive Playgrounds](#)

Wayfinding

- [Canadian Museum for Human Rights Inclusive and Accessible Design Guidelines](#)

Appendix 2: Glossary

Accessibility: A barrier-free experience that offers the same opportunity for everyone to participate in their community

Accessible Pedestrian Signage (APS): “Provides auditory, visual and tactile information so that a person with vision and/or hearing loss will know when it’s safe (i.e., when the walk phase begins) to cross at a set of traffic signals. In addition, an APS may provide information to help a person with blindness travel in a straight line across a street or roadway.”¹⁰ APS was previously referred to as audible pedestrian signals.

Accommodations: “An alteration of environment, program format, or equipment that allows an individual with a disability to gain access¹¹” or participate in a space, place, event or program in a way that meets their needs.

Adaptability: The quality of being able to adjust to new conditions.

American Sign Language (ASL): “A complete, natural language that has the same linguistic properties as spoken languages, with grammar that differs from English. ASL is expressed by movements of the hands and face”¹² and utilized by the Deaf community.

Attitudinal Barriers: “When people think and act based upon [assumptions and misconceptions that limit how a person with a disability can participate], such as making decisions about people with disabilities without including them or not believing that a person with a disability can contribute to the workforce.”¹³

Barrier: “Anything that hinders the full and equal participation in society of a person with [a disability]. Barriers can be caused by environments, attitudes, practices, policies, information, communications or technologies, and affected by intersecting forms of discrimination.”¹⁴

Bias: “A way of thinking or operating based explicitly or implicitly on a stereotype or fixed image of a group of people.”¹⁵ Individuals can be aware or unaware of their biases, the latter of which is referred to as having unconscious bias.

Braille: “A form of written language for [people with sight loss], in which characters are represented by patterns of raised dots that are felt with the fingertips.”¹⁶

Built Environment: The constructed aspects of physical surroundings, “including homes, communities, schools, workplaces, parks/recreation areas, business areas, roads and green spaces, [that vary] in size

10 Clearing Our Path. CNIB Foundation, 2019.

11 Add Reference Uni of Western Washington

12 American Sign Language. National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders, 2021.

13 AccessibleBC: B.C.’s Accessibility Plan 2022/23–2024/25. Government of British Columbia, 2022.

14 Accessible British Columbia Act. Government of British Columbia, 2021.

15 Working Glossary – Addressing Racism. Government of British Columbia, 2023.

16 Braille – The Reading Fingers. Translate Plus, 2015.

from large-scale urban areas to smaller rural developments.”¹⁷ For the purposes of the Plan, the built environment applies to all public spaces. This includes buildings, sidewalks, road systems, parks, playgrounds, and other public infrastructure encountered by people in their everyday life.

Collaboration: The act of two or more people, organizations or departments working together to create or achieve the same outcome.

Cross-Disability: An umbrella term that describes the inclusivity of all forms of disability.

Diversity: Ensuring that there is an honouring and respect for the variety of backgrounds, perspectives, cultures, and experiences that each of us bring.¹⁸

Disability: When the features of a person’s body and mind meet a barrier created by the design of the society in which they live, preventing their full and equal participation. Individual features can be permanent, temporary or episodic; visible or invisible; range in severity; and include physical, sensory, mental health-related, developmental, cognitive and multiple features.¹⁹

Hard Captions: Also known as open captions or embedded captions are seen by everyone who watches the video. These are permanent and cannot be turned off.

Inclusion: The practice or policy of providing equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalized.

Information and Communication Barriers: When communication methods are not accessible by people with disabilities, such as information that is communicated using complex language or jargon or materials that are only available in small print without large print options.²⁰

Multi-use pathways: “Off street pathways that are physically separated from motor vehicle traffic and can be used by any nonmotorized user. This includes people walking, cycling, skateboarding, kick scootering, in-line skating, and using other active modes. Multi-use pathways may also be referred to as shared-use pathways, multi-use trails, and boulevard multi-use pathways.”²¹

Neurodiversity: An umbrella term “used to describe differences in the way people’s brains work. The idea is that there’s no ‘correct’ way for the brain to work. Instead, there is a wide range of ways that people perceive and respond to the world, and these differences are to be embraced and encouraged.”²²

Pedestrian: A term that refers to travelling by their own locomotion outside of a vehicle including on foot or using a wheelchair.

17 Healthy Built Environments. Government of BC, 2017.

18 City of New Westminster DEIAR Framework, 2022

19 Federal Disability Reference Guide. Government of Canada, 2022.

20 AccessibleBC: B.C.’s Accessibility Plan 2022/23–2024/25. Government of British Columbia, 2022.

21 British Columbia Active Transportation Design Guide. Government of British Columbia, 2019.

22 What is Neurodiversity? Child Mind Institute, 2023.

Physical Barriers: “When obstacles in an environment make access difficult, such as a washroom with an accessible stall but no automatic door opener”²³ or a meeting that is hosted in a space with no wheelchair access.

Self-Determination: The process by which a person controls their own life.

Sensory Barriers: “When sensory information such as lights, sounds, smells, etc. prevent participation in the environment, such as co-workers wearing perfume in the workplace or use of fluorescent lighting in the workplace.”²⁴

Stigma: “The negative social attitude attached to a characteristic of an individual that may be regarded as [an attitudinal barrier]. A stigma implies social disapproval and can lead unfairly to discrimination against and exclusion of the individual.”²⁵

Systemic Barriers: When policies or procedures are not inclusive, such as a process that only permits individuals to submit or access information through an online system without alternatives being provided or a driver’s licence being required for a job when another form of transportation could be used.²⁶

Tactile: Tactile information, signals and wayfinding provide the means for individuals to access information through touch, either by input through their hands (e.g. raised print) or information received by tapping a white cane.

Technological Barriers: “When technology can’t be accessed by people with disabilities,”²⁷ such as self-service kiosks without accessibility features or touch screens without screen reader software or tactile keyboards.

Universal Design: “The design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability.”²⁸

Wayfinding: “Refers to information systems that guide people through a physical environment and enhance their understanding and experience of the space.”²⁹ This includes elements like signage, acoustics, illumination and surface finishes.

WCAG: Web content accessibility guidelines.

23 AccessibleBC: B.C.’s Accessibility Plan 2022/23–2024/25. Government of British Columbia, 2022.

24 AccessibleBC: B.C.’s Accessibility Plan 2022/23–2024/25. Government of British Columbia, 2022.

25 APA Dictionary of Psychology. American Psychological Association, 2023.

26 AccessibleBC: B.C.’s Accessibility Plan 2022/23–2024/25. Government of British Columbia, 2022.

27 AccessibleBC: B.C.’s Accessibility Plan 2022/23–2024/25. Government of British Columbia, 2022.

28 Centre for Excellence in Universal Design. National Disability Authority, 2020.

29 What is Wayfinding? The Society of Experiential Graphic Design, 2022.