

City of New Westminster

Accessibility Plan 2023



NEW WESTMINSTER

Table of Contents

Introduction

Background

Focus Areas

Moving Forward

Monitoring & Evaluation

INTRODUCTION

New Westminster is a diverse city, rich with people from a wide range of lived and living experiences. 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.

This means recognizing and celebrating difference, valuing the contributions made by all staff and community members, and identifying and removing attitudinal, systemic, physical, sensory, information/communication, and technology barriers. We recognize that individuals have multiple identities and lived realities that intersect and affect how diverse groups experience barriers and accessibility.

The City of New Westminster is committed to providing people of all abilities opportunities to participate in their communities through work, play, and other daily activities.

BACKGROUND

New Westminster recognizes that accessibility means removing barriers and increasing inclusion and independence for everyone. As a City we are continually developing and enhancing a variety of plans, standards, programs and initiatives through community engagement, coordinated and collaborative research, and community-based assessments. One of our objectives is to ensure our practices, services, and communication are inclusive and accessible for everyone in our community.

To further enhance this process the Accessibility Advisory Committee will be reviewing current practices, standards, and services to assist with continuous improvement through recommendations, new standards and inclusivity measures to support people with a variety of disabilities in order to enhance and develop equitable opportunities to access, participate and contribute.

FOCUS AREAS

In this inaugural Accessibility Plan the City of New Westminster will be enhancing the accessibility standards within the following key focus areas:

- Built Environment
- Service Delivery
- Information and Communications
- Employment

The accessibility plan and associated approaches and standards will be based on core accessibility principles including: inclusion, adaptability, diversity, collaboration, self-determination, and universal design. At the same time, this process will be holistic and collaborative with support from all work areas across the City including our Library, Police and Fire.

The Accessibility Plan strategically aligns with 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 Homes and Housing Options, Safe Movement of People, Asset Management and Infrastructure, and People-Centered Economy.

BUILT ENVIRONMENT

The City of New Westminster actively works with various community partners, contractors, external agencies and other partners to improve, update and create infrastructure that addresses sustainability and accessibility for our communities.

The City has a variety of initiatives that focus on addressing safe and accessible movement throughout our neighbourhoods:

Master Transportation Plan & Neighbourhood 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.

Active Transportation Network Plan

The Active Transportation Network Plan is a city-wide plan that focuses on 26 active transportation routes across New Westminster that are designed for people of all ages and abilities. The plan emphasizes cycling but acknowledges that users of mobility aids will also access this infrastructure.

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 our streets.

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. Equally, the updated Zoning Bylaw includes provisions for accessible parking.

Wheelability Assessment Project

In March 2019 the City received a Built Environment and Active Transportation Grant of \$25,000 to implement the Wheelability Assessment Project to improve mobility and transportation options for people reliant on mobility aids.

In addition, the City has installed curb letdowns, countdown timers and accessible pushbuttons, and improved pedestrian crossings to enhance safety and accessibility. There are also a variety of accessible design examples within our City, such as Tactile Walking Surface Indicators (TWSIs) at Agnes Greenway, wheelchair accessible picnic tables at Victoria Hill Play Space and Moody Park, improved accessible parking at Moody Park Arena, and improved pathways for wheeled apparatus at Riverside Park.

SERVICE DELIVERY

The City of New Westminster has been working on providing increased accessibility with our facilities and services, which has included updating accessibility policies, completing an accessibility audit and compiling a list of recommendations. Some of our current services, projects and initiatives include:

New Westminster's Official Community Plan

The Official Community Plan provides a vision, goals, and policies for the City of New Westminster to the year 2041, which includes specific actions, development permit guidelines, and land use designations. This Plan is implemented by the City in various ways, including through policy initiatives, public programs, civic projects, and bylaws.

Financial Assistance

New Westminster residents can receive a 50% discount on eligible programs and approved household members are granted \$1000 non-transferable credits that are used within a certain timeframe.

Access Tickets

The Access Tickets initiative includes providing bulk sales to pre-approved qualifying Social Service agencies that offer mental health residential or transitional services in New Westminster. 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.

Drop-In Programs

When a support person is needed to assist one of our customers to partake in admission-based programs, we provide free admission to the accompanying support person.

Try It Programs

Each season we offer new opportunities at our \$2.00 rate. The Try It program offerings change seasonally and the reduced fee applies to everyone to experience new programs and build community connections.

New Westminster Age and Ability Friendly Community Strategy

In August 2016 the City was approached by UBC's School of Community and Regional Planning (SCARP) to participate in a Studio Project, which assisted with the creation of the New Westminster Age-Friendly Community Strategy in April 2017.

New Westminster Dementia-Friendly Community Action Plan

A Dementia-Friendly Community Action Plan was developed February 2016, which included creating a framework through a project working group, survey, and literature review.

Age Friendly City Initiative

The Age-Friendly City Initiative includes the results of a consultation process that included 72 respondents who completed a Checklist of Essential Features of Age Friendly Cities developed by the World Health Organization as a part of its Global Age Friendly Cities Project.

Everybody Active

The City received funding from the BC Recreation and Parks Association under the Everybody Initiative and a report with consultation findings was created in November 2009.

Accessibility Features

Each of our public city spaces including recreation centres, parks and arenas are accessible. All Recreation Centres offer accessible parking, accessible entrances and washrooms. Also, park accessibility refers to corresponding trails, parking, and washrooms that can accommodate wheelchairs.

The təməsew̓txʷ Aquatic and Community Centre

The təməsew̓txʷ Aquatic and Community Centre is a multi-year project that is scheduled to open in 2024, and we are working with the Rick Hansen Foundation to ensure it meets their accessibility certification process.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS

The City of New Westminster works with internal and external partners to ensure a variety of communication methods are utilized to promote city programs, plans, services, and events.

A key component of information and communications includes public engagement, which provides community members an opportunity to provide their voice on the projects and initiatives that impact their lives. The City's engagement work is guided by the Public Engagement Policy and Public Engagement Strategy.

To ensure equitable access to information we use the following ways to communicate with the public:

- Citypage Online newsletter, which is emailed directly to subscribers
- City of New Westminster social media channels (YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.)
- Digital billboards throughout the city
- Posters in City-owned facilities
- City of New Westminster website/New Westminster Police Department website
- City Calendar of Events
- Press releases
- Reports and brochures
- Digital monitors inside City-owned facilities
- Advertising in local news publications

We actively seek opportunities to improve accessibility by employing the following options wherever possible:

- Captions in videos
- Using photos that address diversity and inclusiveness
- Alt Text that enables assistive technology to describe an image
- Plain language
- Websites designed and coded so people with disabilities can use them
- Simplifying layout and design

Be Heard New West

Be Heard is the City's online community engagement platform that provides a consistent, user-friendly online space where New West residents and community partners can learn about City projects, share their feedback and engage in dialogue with each other.

Community members can register on the site and receive updates when new projects are posted and projects are updated. The goal is to build an active online community and have residents and business operators coming to the online site regularly to engage with the City.

EMPLOYMENT

The City of New Westminster supports each work area with respect to recruitment and selection, learning and development, return to work initiatives, leadership and professional growth as well as developing and maintaining and various processes, procedures and policies for a safe, respectful and inclusive work environment.

Current Services, Projects and Initiatives:

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

Through a relationship 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, which included the Police and Library Boards.

The framework includes next step recommendations, toolkits, resources as well as key areas 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 Strategies

Through the development of the DEIAR framework, the Human Resources Department has been working in conjunction with Hiring Managers to review our recruitment strategies, which has included adopting the following:

- Updating the verbiage within our postings to include a diversity statement and land acknowledgement
- Reviewing postings for inclusive languages, such as highlighting opportunities for experience in place of education, and ensuring tasks/duties are not portrayed as gender specific
- Adopting alternate strategies to enhance the recruitment process such as:
 - Pre-screening through telephone calls
 - Utilizing and offering virtual interviews
 - Providing interview questions before the interview
 - Streamlining the recruitment process with combined interviews and testing
 - Providing feedback to applicants to encourage growth and development opportunities

New Talent Management System (Taleo)

A new Talent Management System (Taleo) has been implemented to assist with streamlining the application process. Through the new system candidates can explore job postings, set-up their profile, and establish alerts for future opportunities.

Establishing Community Relationships

Working with different post-secondary institutions to explore co-op learning opportunities, as well as establish partnerships. With more in-person events we have started attending local job fairs as well as conducting outreach to form relationships with diverse organizations including local agencies, post secondary institutions, and return to work program providers.

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, biases, and systemic limitations through conversations, research, audits, partnerships, and community engagement.

This will include enhancing our physical environment as well as the various services and programs provided throughout the City to increase active opportunities to enhance inclusion, adaptability, diversity, collaboration, self-determination, and universal design.

The overall intent is to explore and apply various accessibility tools, guidelines and standards to enhance our built environment, service delivery, information and communications, and employment in order to prioritize accessibility and inclusion.

MONITORING & EVALUATION

The accessibility actions will be monitored with annual reports, and an evaluation matrix will be developed to measure the impact of the Accessibility Plan. The results of the evaluation and input from different sources will support the development of the next Accessibility Plan.