



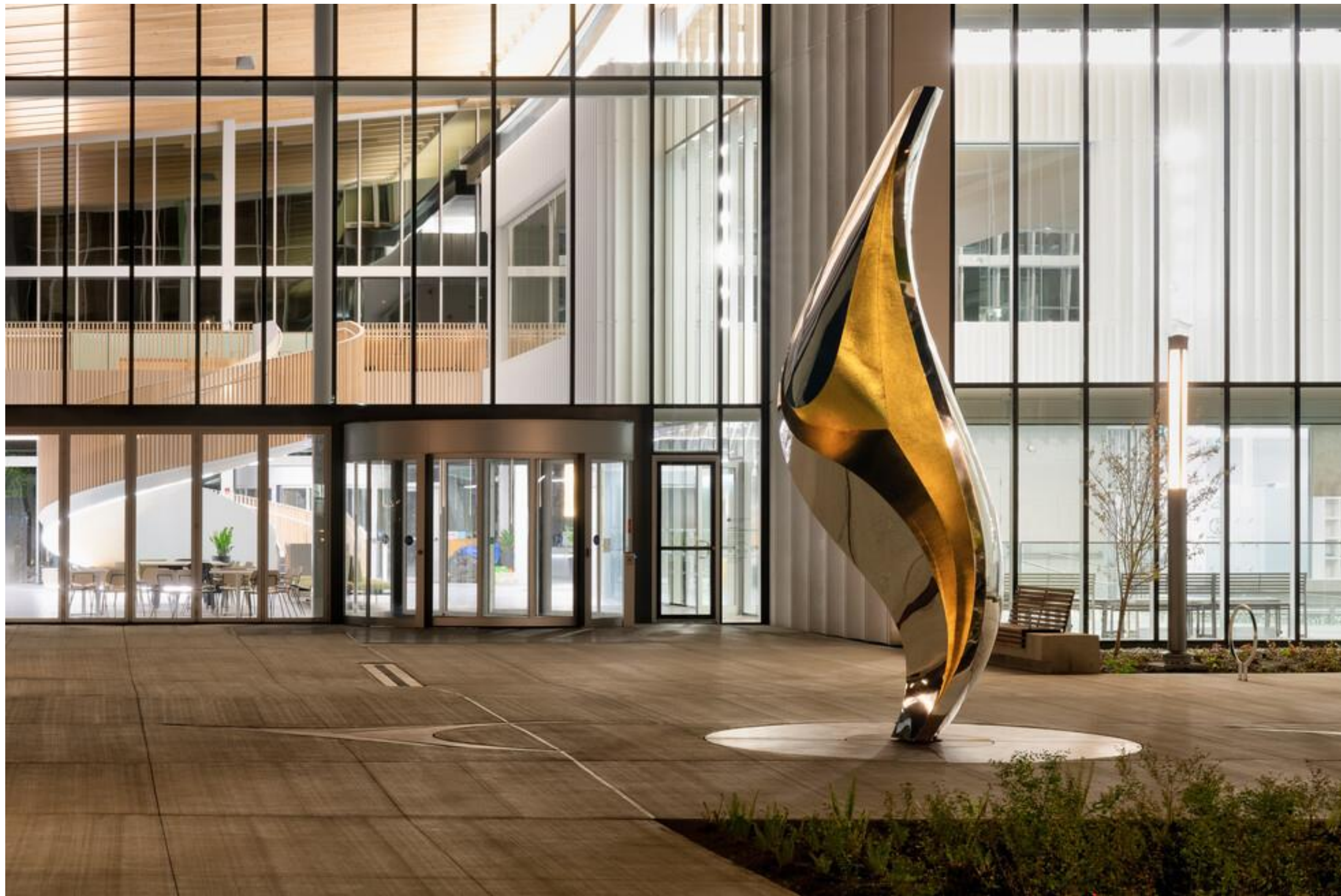
City-wide Toilet Strategy

Accessibility Advisory Committee

March 11, 2025



NEW WESTMINSTER



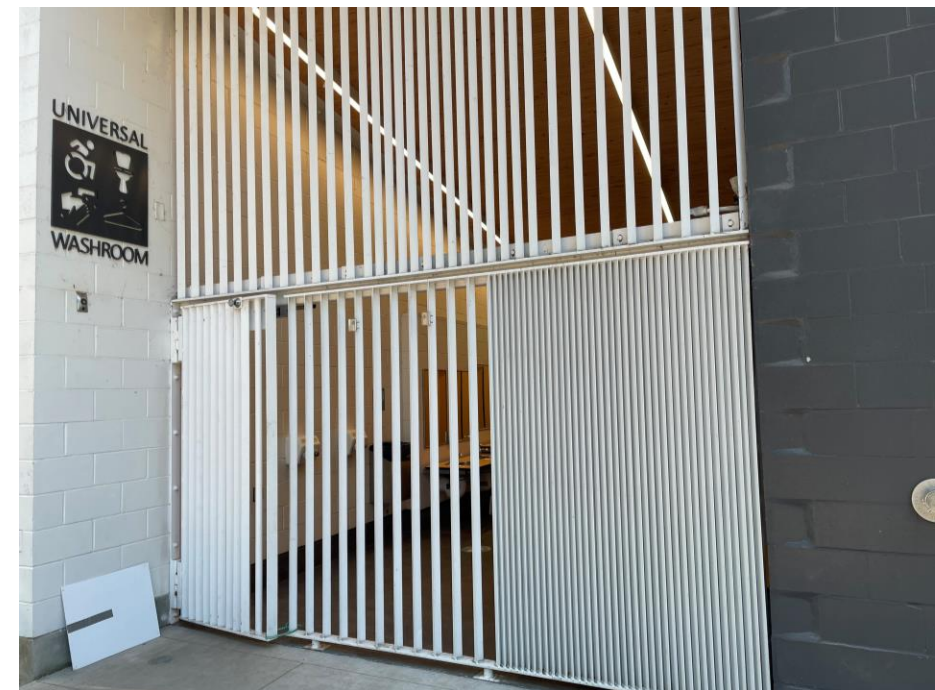
We recognize and respect that New Westminster is on the unceded and unsundered land of the Halkomelem speaking peoples. We acknowledge that colonialism has made invisible their histories and connections to the land. As a City, we are learning and building relationships with the people whose lands we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

Image source: [Miyiwt's - Water's Edge | City of New Westminster](#)

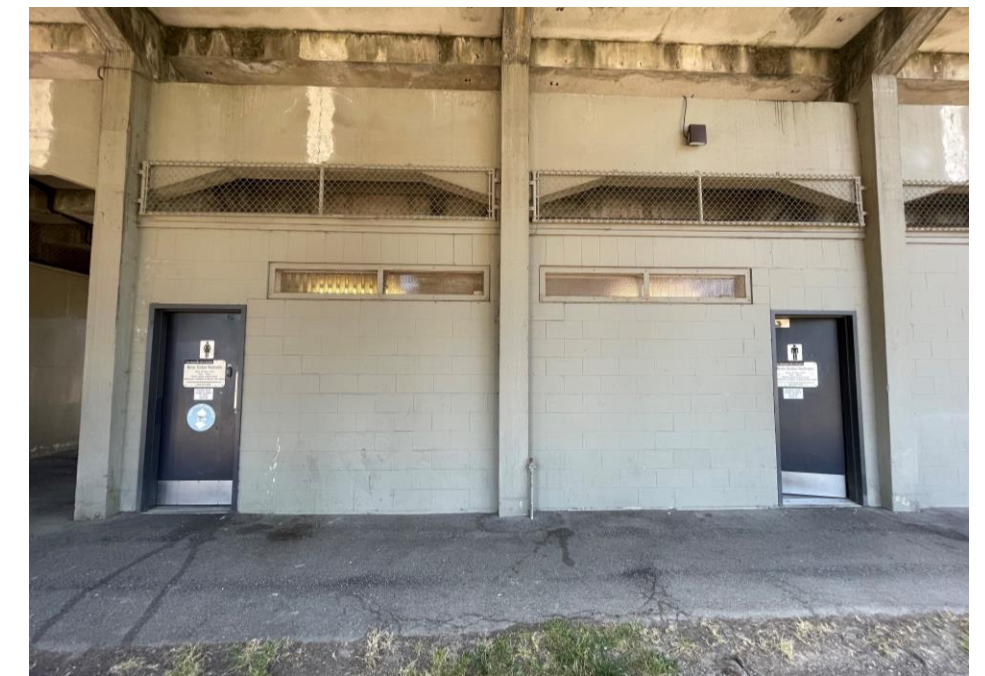
Agenda



City-wide Toilet Strategy Background



Aims of the City-wide Toilet Strategy



Strategy Development Phases and workplan



Discussion



Next Steps

Background

Key Issues related to toilet access in New Westminster:

Human Rights:

- Access to toilets is vital for dignity and independence (especially for seniors, people with underlying health conditions, and people with disabilities).
- Essential for unhoused individuals who lack other options for toilets and other hygiene services; findings from the 2022 Homelessness Action Strategy confirmed this.

COVID-19 Pandemic and Response:

- City installed portable toilets with senior government funding during the pandemic
 - Benefits: Increased access for unhoused people.
 - Challenges: High operational costs, difficult maintenance, and inadequate for all community needs (accessibility, safety, comfort).

Gaps in existing toilet infrastructure:

- Existing toilet infrastructure not meeting the needs of certain user groups due to gaps in availability, hours, and location

Rising presence of human waste in public/private spaces contributing to poor public health

City-wide Toilet Strategy: Aims



Assess Current Landscape

Review publicly funded and semi-public toilets in New Westminster: locations, hours, maintenance, and accessibility.



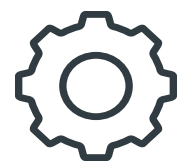
Identify Gaps & Needs

Analyze gaps and engage with user groups to understand access issues and needs across the city.



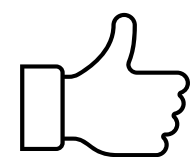
Develop Recommendations

Synthesize findings from all research and engagement activities and develop recommendations that will inform the final strategy.



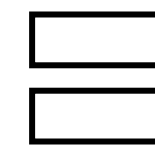
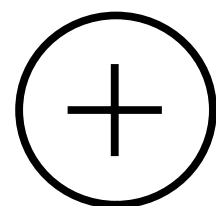
Learn from Other Jurisdictions and Interest Groups

Identify best practices and partnerships for providing public toilets

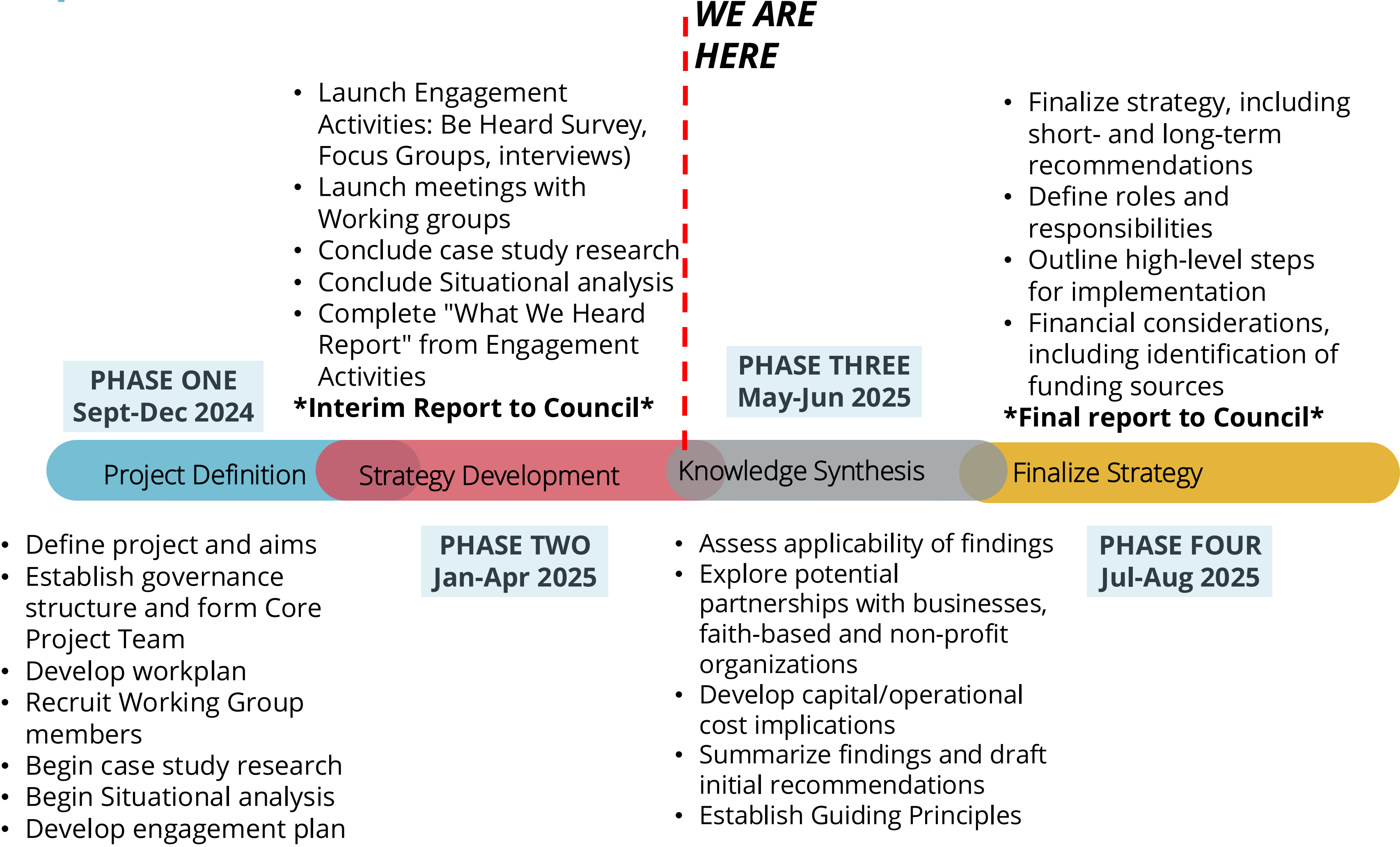


Identify Solutions

Engage with key user groups, community service providers, businesses, and others to identify potential solutions



City-wide Toilet Strategy: Workplan and Timeline



Municipal Approaches to Public Toilet Provision

- Canadian municipalities experience significant challenges in implementing comprehensive toilet strategies:
 - Jurisdiction
 - Infrastructure
 - Funding



Source: City of Victoria Public Washroom Strategy Presentation, 2023

- Most municipal strategies identify key demographics that should be included in planning for the provision of public toilets.
- Partnerships with the private sector or non-profit organizations were pursued in some contexts, with varying degrees of success

Case Study Research: Research Questions

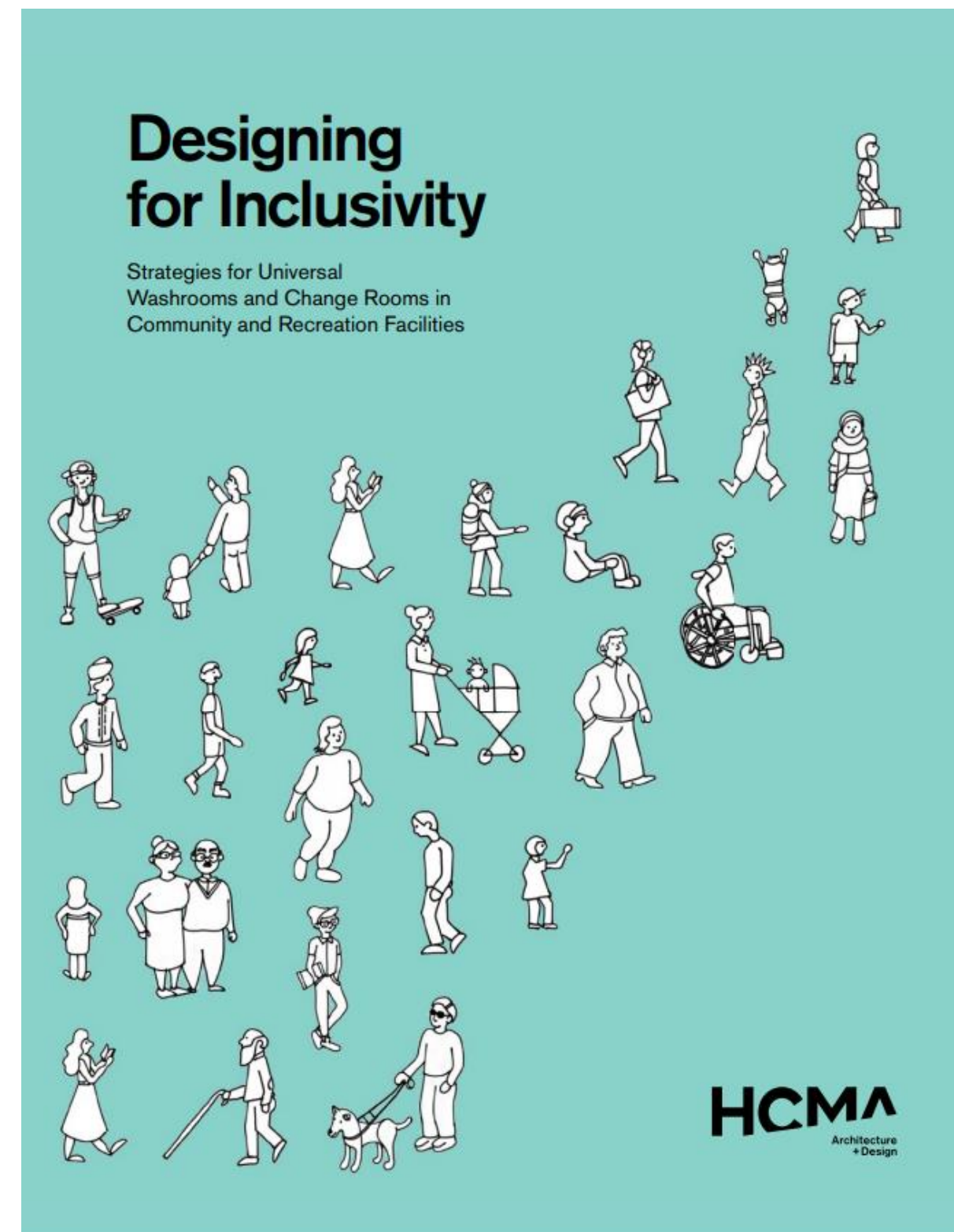
- **How are local governments in other jurisdictions in Canada approaching the provision of public toilets?**
 - The role of municipalities
 - The role of community serving organizations
 - Examples of public-private partnerships to support increased access to toilets for underserved groups
- **What are the primary barriers faced, particularly by equity-denied groups, in accessing toilets?**
 - Are the barriers different based on who operates the toilet (public, semi-public, or private)?
 - What are some factors that are likely to make someone feel more welcome in accessing toilets?

Barriers and Welcoming Factors

Common barriers included:

- **Situational needs**
- **Accessibility beyond "wheelchair access"**
- **Inadequate or confusing signage**
- **Acceptability, privacy, cleanliness, dignity**
- **Stigma**

Welcoming factors included hygiene, cleanliness, and adequate space for caregiving, strollers, mobility aids, universal signage



Universal design principles were named as a promising practice to address the accessibility needs of multiple user groups

The Role of Community-Serving Organizations and the Private Sector

Partnerships, including with non-profit organizations or with the private sector were explored in some settings, with varying success.

- Community Toilet Schemes
- Technological solutions (i.e. Go Here)
- Priority access "passes" ("Can't wait" cards, or "Restroom Help Pass")



Source: [Community Toilet Scheme - Royston Town Council](#)



Source: [GutsUK](#)



Source: [Crohn's and Colitis Canada](#)



The Role of Community-Serving Organizations and the Private Sector



- Attendant and Support Services
Amoowigamig: More Than a Washroom
(Winnipeg, MB)

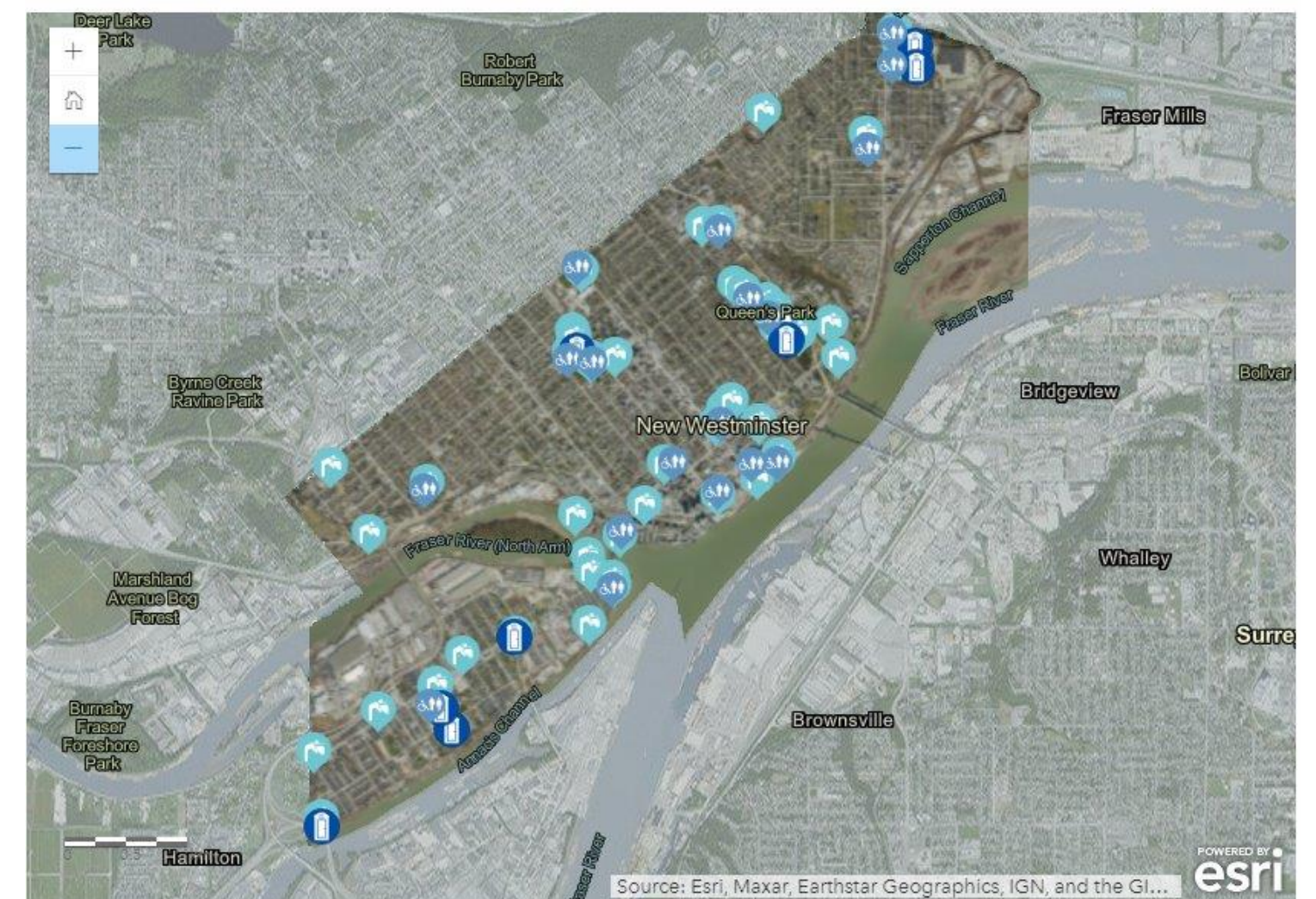
Source: [The Winnipeg Foundation](#)



Situational Analysis

We conducted a **situational analysis** on all *publicly available toilets* in the City to understand:

- Their geographic distribution across the City
- Gaps in seasonal availability of toilets
- Gaps in hours of operation
- Maintenance and cleaning schedules; and
- The overall accessibility and quality of publicly available toilets.



Sources included publicly available data on the City of New Westminster's website, regional data from Metro Vancouver, the *Go Here* app, and follow up conversations with City staff responsible for overseeing toilets.

Types of Toilets examined in the Situational Analysis

Three Toilet Categories:

Public Toilets

- Available to all members of the public.
- No purchase or membership required.
- Includes toilets in City buildings (parks, recreation centres, library)



Toilets in Private Settings

- Available in private buildings (businesses, restaurants).
- Open to members of the public through participation in the GoHere program.

Toilets in Public Spaces

- Available to (some) members of the public.
- No purchase or membership required.
- Located on private property (e.g., shopping centres).

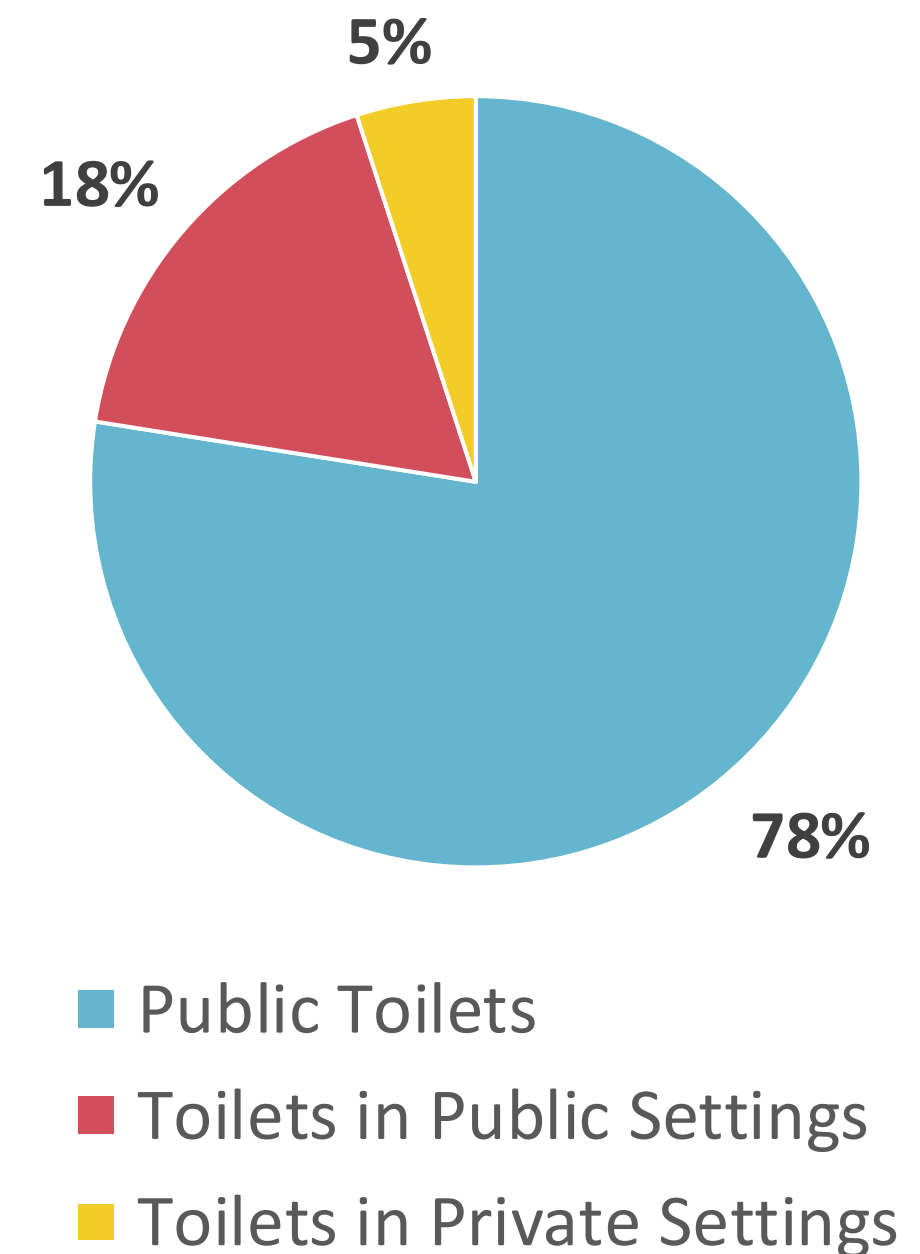


Situational Analysis

High-level Findings:

- Most of the toilets in the city are **public** and managed by the City. The private sector plays a much smaller role in the provision of publicly available toilets
- In general, more **densely populated areas have wider access to toilets** compared to areas that are more residential or industrial
- There are very few toilets that are available in the evening (between 6 and 9pm), and **even more limited** options overnight.
- Information on **maintenance and cleaning schedules** was limited, so the quality of all toilets was difficult to assess.
- There is **no one single information source** that provides up to date information about all toilets in the city, making wayfinding difficult.

Publicly Available Washrooms by Classification



Situational Analysis

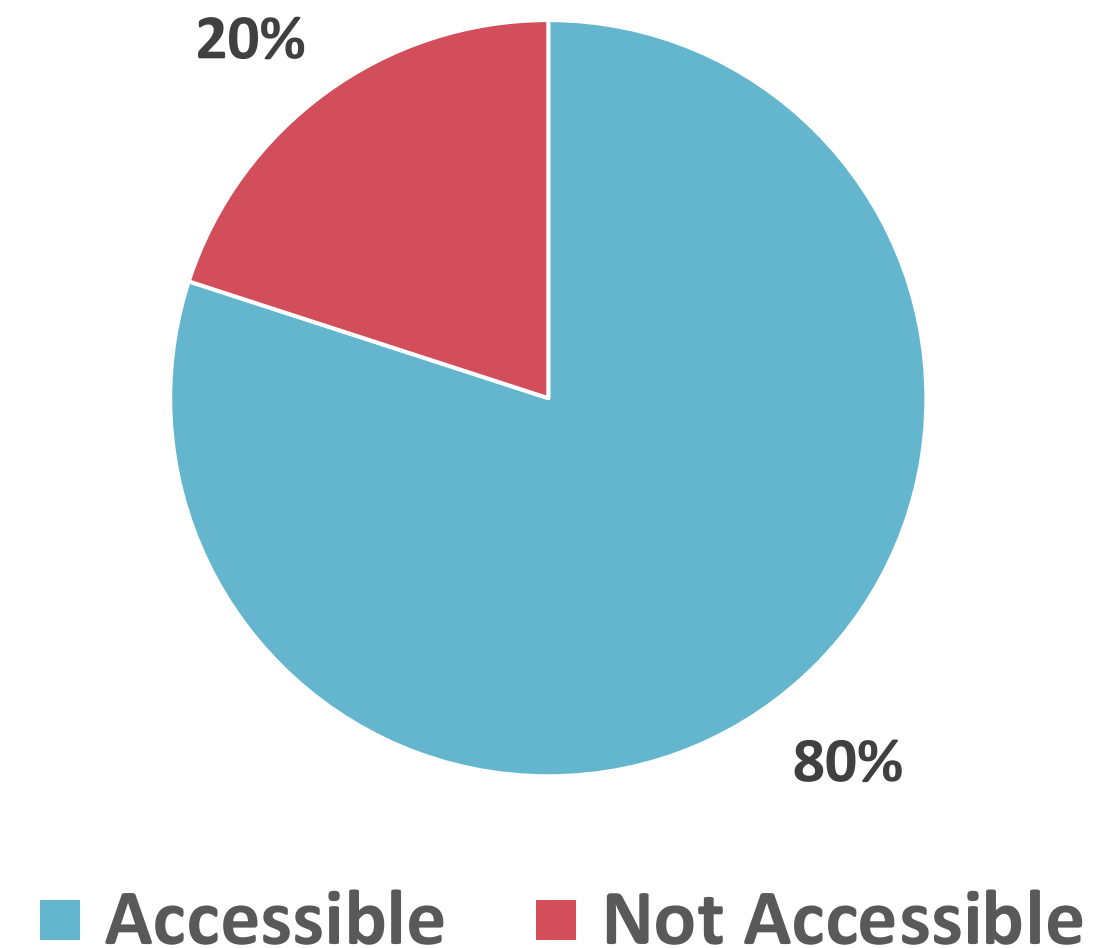
For People Living with Disabilities:

Accessible Toilets:

- 32 out of 40 publicly available toilets in New Westminster are **listed as accessible** in the data sources that were consulted
- Accessibility is generally considered better in **permanent structures** rather than temporary (portable) toilets. 79% of toilets in the City are permanent.



Accessibility in Publicly Available Toilets



The **extent and range of accessibility features** in each toilet is not clear: preliminary findings from **community engagement** revealed that there are several accessibility needs that are not meeting the needs of people living with disabilities.

- Considerations for people who are visually impaired
- Sensory issues and considerations for people who are neurodivergent
- Non-slip floors and counter heights

Community Engagement

Completed: Be Heard Survey

Be Heard survey was held between January 9th and February 2nd, 2025.

Completed: Focused Engagement

Focused engagement activities were held between January 10th and February 13th, 2025, and included focus groups, interviews, and workshops with composite community groups

In progress:

Interviews with City staff, engagement with other municipalities

Ongoing:

Engagement with internal and external working groups



Engagement Report will be available on the Be Heard website:

https://www.beheardnewwest.ca/city-wide-toilet-strategy?tool=survey_tool&tool_id=survey#tool_tab

Questions for your Consideration:

- 1. What do you think are the main challenges or barriers that people living with disabilities and their caregivers face when trying to locate and/or access public toilets?***
- 2. How do you think these barriers could be addressed in the City-wide Toilet Strategy?***
- 3. Many people rely on private businesses (such as coffee shops, or gas stations) for toilets. To increase access to toilets, other cities have developed partnership or incentive programs to support businesses and encourage them to provide access to the public. What do you think of this concept? Can you see any challenges for people living with disabilities in this approach?***
- 4. Is there anything else you'd like to share about access to toilets in New Westminster?***