

City of Victoria Accessibility Framework

November 7, 2019

Committee of the Whole

Engineering & Public Works Department



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BACKGROUND & PURPOSE

- In 2017 the Accessibility Working Group (AWG) identified the importance of developing a **city-wide Accessibility Framework** to operationalize the goal of providing accessible facilities, services, products, programs and employment.
- This report and presentation provides an overview of the planning, consultation and development of the Accessibility Framework
- Options and considerations to proceed and complete components related to the Accessibility Program



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INTRODUCTION

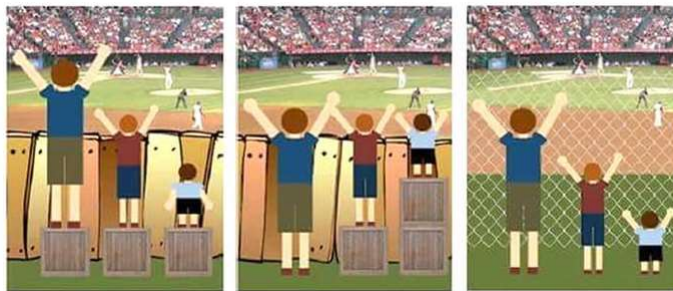
- The City of Victoria is taking deliberate steps to make itself a more inclusive community for people with disabilities
- People with disabilities have not always not had a full say in the planning and municipal service delivery processes.
- Many City programs, services and infrastructure have been introduced over time, without due consideration for how these may affect people with disabilities.
- While a number of actions have been taken or are underway, a more comprehensive and systematic approach is required.



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ACCESSIBILITY AS PART OF INCLUSION

- The Framework addresses a single element of community equity and inclusion
- It is a part of emerging actions and priorities that aim to improve overall social health and well-being across the city
- The City will continually assess how to best integrate these different equity initiatives, to maximize impact and resource efficiency.



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WHAT IS MEANT BY ACCESSIBILITY?

Accessibility is a complex & cross-sectional public policy issue that cuts across all levels of government

Accessibility is about how we can remove and prevent barriers to participation that individuals with disabilities encounter in their daily lives.

Inclusion is about ensuring equitable access to services and opportunities and the ability for every individual to participate fully and equally in all aspects of society

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WHAT WE HEARD

- People with disabilities face a number of barriers in Victoria which prevent them from fully participating in our community.
- Those with lived experiences want to regularly and meaningfully be involved
- There is an overarching need for comprehensive awareness, education and understanding
- The City must continue to remove existing barriers and prevent new barriers
- By taking systematic action to improve accessibility, we can directly improve the health, well-being and economic outcomes for our residents



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THE FRAMEWORK STRUCTURE

- Introduction
- Accessibility Definitions
- Lived Experience
- Disability and Barrier Types
- Community Accessibility Profile
- City Accessibility Commitment
- Policy and Legislative Context
- The City's Role
- Directions for the City
- Universal Design Standards
- Focus Areas
 - Built Environment
 - Government Programs and Services
 - Capacity and Collaboration
- Implementing the Framework



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TYPES OF DISABILITIES

- There are a **wide range of disabilities** in our community
 - It is important to **avoid preconceptions** about what a disability is
 - Some disabilities are **visible** while others are **non-visible** and not immediately apparent to others
 - Impacts people of **all backgrounds and ages**
- Pain
 - Flexibility, Mobility and Dexterity
 - Mental Health
 - Learning and Memory
 - Visual Disabilities
 - Hearing
 - Developmental
 - Other

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TYPES OF BARRIERS

- Attitudinal
- Informational or Communication
- Technological
- Physical or Architectural
- Organizational or Systemic

The City of Victoria is committed to removing existing and preventing the creation of new barriers through the application of this framework and its actions.



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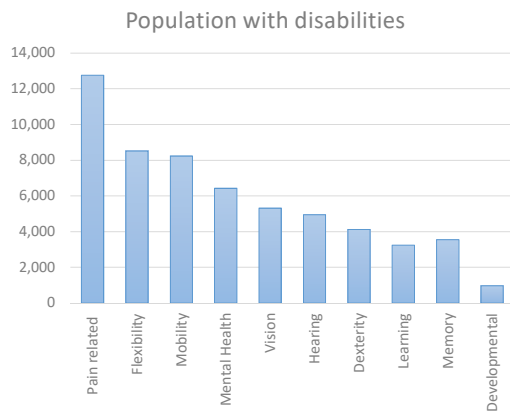
OUR COMMUNITY PROFILE

- Understanding our community profile can help to refine areas of City responsibility, where more attention is needed or where processes need to be in place to accommodate people with disabilities.
 - An estimated **1 in 10 Victorians** over the age of 15 have a severe or very severe disability
 - It is estimated that **over 19,000 individuals or 21% of our population** in the City of Victoria have one or more disabilities
 - Residents from other municipalities and visitors with disabilities add to this population
 - The prevalence of disability increases with age



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OUR COMMUNITY PROFILE



Two-thirds of Canadians expressed the concern that someone they know will face a disability over the next decade.

Three in ten Canadians say accessibility is a consideration for them when they think about the places they will go and which they will avoid in their community.



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INVESTING IN ACCESSIBILITY

- This framework aims to **recognize the gaps and opportunities** to improve accessibility
- By valuing the importance of accessibility, we can directly **improve health and well-being** for people in our community.
- If policies and actions are implemented thoughtfully and effectively, we can **increase independence, employment and education rates, alleviate poverty and increase sense of belonging** for residents and visitors alike



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STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

- Victoria is committed to identifying, preventing and removing barriers across its services, programs and infrastructure, in order to benefit community in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities.
- Victoria values the contributions from all citizens and believes that diversity strengthens the community. The City recognizes the essential knowledge and perspectives of people with lived experience and commits to making sure those voices are part of community planning and decisions.
- Victoria will ensure that staff and council are aware of their roles in influencing accessibility for people with disabilities and accept their responsibility to support positive City community attitudes.



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KEY FRAMEWORK PRINCIPLES

Adapted the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)

- **Inclusion**
- **Diversity**
- **Respect**
- **Collaboration**
- **Adaptability**



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ROLE OF THE CITY

The framework identifies key areas of responsibility for identifying, removing and preventing accessibility barriers:

- Public infrastructure, building and spaces
- City programs and services
- Municipal information, regulations and policies

And the City's role, related to:

- Leadership by example
- Advocacy and partnerships



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FOCUS AREAS

- 1. Built Environment** – promoting accessibility as a collective good and a key component in urban policy, design, planning and development.
- 2. Government and Services** – Removing barriers and increasing participation in local government programs, services, information and public decision making.
- 3. Capacity and Collaboration** – Developing increased corporate capacity to deliver professional services. Developing partnerships and advocate to other levels of government and community stakeholders. Collaborating with key community partners and setting a strong example.



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UNIVERSAL DESIGN

Principles to guide design of environments, products and services:

Equitable Use: Useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities.

Flexibility in Use: Accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.

Simple and Intuitive Use: Easy to understand

Perceptible Information: Communicates necessary information

Tolerance for Error: Minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.

Low Physical Effort: Used efficiently and comfortably and with a minimum of fatigue.

Size and Space for Approach and Use: Appropriate size and space is provided



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BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Objective

- To remove and prevent barriers in public spaces, mobility systems and City-owned buildings and facilities.

Key Commitments

- Prevent and remove barriers from City infrastructure and places, transportation infrastructure, facilities, parks and open spaces.
- Evaluate and prioritize retrofits to existing City places and spaces to meet modern accessibility standards.
- Develop accessible indicators for mobility, facilities, parks and open spaces



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GOVERNMENT & SERVICES

Objective

- To provide all residents and visitors with equitable access to municipal programs, services, employment opportunities, information and engagement opportunities.

Key Commitments

- Align our public website, on-line digital resources, communication guidelines and publication standards with latest accessible communications standards.
- Increase our customer service standards at all City public service counters for people with visible and non-visible disabilities.
- Increase offerings of recreational program opportunities for people with disabilities.
- Support and include people with disabilities in City-led special events and ceremonies.
- Encourage and support full participation by people with disabilities in City engagement processes.
- Ensure formal staff reports include pertinent accessibility information and impact statements.
- Improve accessibility of municipal election processes.
- Advertise, encourage and promote diverse participation in city advisory committees and boards.

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CAPACITY AND COLLABORATION

Objective

- To ensure City employees have the knowledge and capacity to meet municipal accessibility needs.
- To lead accessibility change-making within the City mandate.
- To help promote more collaborative, positive, attitudes towards an inclusive community.

Key Commitments

- Provide enhanced training and awareness to foster a welcoming corporate environment for people with disabilities.
- Demonstrate inclusivity in City publications and materials.
- Introduce resources and processes to support and coordinate accessibility efforts, projects and programs.
- Facilitate regular activities to improve the City's knowledge and understanding of lived-experience and accessibility challenges across our community.
- Engage with and collaborate across local disability stakeholder groups.

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ACTION PLANNING

- **Insights from the community and recognition of gaps** in our existing operations have shaped recommendations
 - In some cases, specific solutions, issues or ideas we heard have been grouped into broader actions
- The action plan includes **27 actions within the first 3 years** across all departments
- Progress to be reviewed and reported as part of the City's business reporting cycles



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Foundational Actions

- Adopt a City-Wide Accessibility Policy
- Hire a dedicated staff person to help coordinate program delivery through liaison with key department staff and community resources
- Develop new design standards for city programs, facilities, transportation systems, public realm, engagement processes, information sharing and decision-making activities
- Develop and start implementing staff training and awareness programs (general and specific subject-matter training)
- Establish Terms of Reference for an Advisory Body that will be able to provide ongoing input into inclusion issues
- Review the Council Procedures bylaw for opportunities to increase accessibility in City Decision Making
- Develop a formal Accessibility Accommodation Request Process for members of the public seeking support to access City Services and programs



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CORPORATE ACCESSIBILITY POLICY

- Formalizes our corporate commitment to:
 - *Take the necessary steps to ensure people with disabilities are treated with respect and have equitable access and opportunity to participate and contribute to City policies, engagement activities, programs and services, communications and technology, employee services and infrastructure.*
 - *Ensure accessibility is part of a continuous improvement process in relevant City policies and planning documents, and across engagement activities, programs and services, communications and technology, employee services and infrastructure that considers individual needs and diverse abilities.*
- Six Policy Statements
- Consistent with format and approach other City policies.



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OPTIONS

Option 1: Refine and Finalize Current Draft after final engagement activities (recommended)

Option 2: Approve draft materials and publish

Option 3: Rework the Framework and Associated Documentation

Option 4: Await Provincial Policy Direction before Finalizing Draft



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RECOMMENDATION: OPTION 1

1. Complete stakeholder engagement on the proposed draft, finalize edits and ready the document for final Council approval, in Quarter 1 2020;
2. Continue to participate in stakeholder consultation processes on the development of Accessibility Legislation in the Province of BC;
3. Endorse the policy statement noted in Appendix D and direct staff to report back with a formal policy for consideration in Q1 2020;
4. Refer consideration of adding a staff resource to the 2020 financial planning process; and
5. Report back on the Terms of Reference for an Advisory Board to enable ongoing input from persons with lived-experience on issues relating to accessibility.



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PRIORITIZATION TOOL

- With support of our consultants, staff have developed an accessibility prioritization tool
- The goal of the tool is to support evaluation and prioritization of capital and operating investments in the built environment / city facilities
- The tool is intended to help identify top-candidate projects and investments by determining relative impact, risks and considerations to bring forward as a part of financial planning / budget process
- Inputs to the tool include:
 - estimated number of people impacted by retrofit
 - estimated cost
 - estimated annual users in location
 - one-time or recurring annual costs



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ACCESSIBILITY vs ACCOMODATION

Accommodation is not the same as accessibility, and accessibility is always preferable to accommodation

Accommodation refers to the changes or modifications made to a system to meet the needs of a specific individual or group.

Accessible systems and programs are designed at the outset to be usable by as many people as possible, regardless of ability.

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POLICY & LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

- 1973 BC Human Rights Code
- 1975 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons
- 2006 United Nations Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- 2014 Province of BC Accessibility Action Plan
- 2019 Accessible Canada Act
- 2019 Province of BC Accessibility Legislation Consultation



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NATURE OF OUR WORK

- We will work within our jurisdictional authority to complement the actions of other regional agencies who play important roles in improving the outcomes for people with disabilities
 - Capacity Building
 - Prevention of new barriers
 - Removal of existing barriers
 - Gathering insights
 - Integrated planning



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