

Accessibility Framework: Engagement Summary

Introduction

The City of Victoria has made it a strategic priority to develop an Accessibility Framework that will illustrate the City’s commitments to accessibility and inclusion. The City applied the level of collaborate in the spectrum of public participation, through advice and support from the City’s Accessibility Working Group (AWG). To gather a further understanding of accessibility in Victoria, the City sought the input of people with lived experiences and experts in the sphere of inclusion, applying techniques of *involve* and *consult*, in the spectrum of public participation.

| | | INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION | | | | |
|---------------------------|--|--|--|---|--|--|
| | | INFORM | CONSULT | INVOLVE | COLLABORATE | EMPOWER |
| PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL | | To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions. | To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions. | To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered. | To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution. | To place final decision making in the hands of the public. |
| PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC | | We will keep you informed. | We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision. We will seek your feedback on drafts and proposals. | We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision. | We will work together with you to formulate solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible. | We will implement what you decide. |

Opportunities for stakeholders and members of the public to participate in the process were promoted through:

- The City's website (Latest News, Town Hall @ VCC web page, events calendar)
- Social media posts and paid "boosts"
- Stakeholder email to local organizations, including community associations
- City of Victoria Connect Newsletter
- Newspaper advertisements in the Times Colonist and Vic News

The design consultation process included:

- Online survey (188 participants) - voluntary online survey focused on barrier identification in the city; not directly a part of engagement strategy but informed content for Framework
- Community Town Hall (40 attendees)
- Agency partner workshop (13 participants)
- Focus Groups with Lived Experience Community (20 participants)
- Accessibility Working Group (AWG) Workshops and Meetings - numerous
- Emails submitted to the City

What we did:

Summer 2017:

- Accessibility Survey

November 2018:

- Agency Partner Workshop. Partners in attendance included:
 - Vision Loss Rehabilitation BC
 - Island Deaf and Hard of Hearing Centre
 - Council of Canadians with Disabilities
 - Disability Alliance BC
 - Inclusion BC
 - Disability Resource Centre
 - Barrier Free BC
 - Recreation Integration Victoria
 - University of Victoria Society for Students with Disabilities
 - Blind Skills Training
- AWG Workshop

July 2019:

- Accessibility Town Hall
- Focus Groups with Lived Experience Community
- AWG Workshop

October 2019:

- AWG Workshop

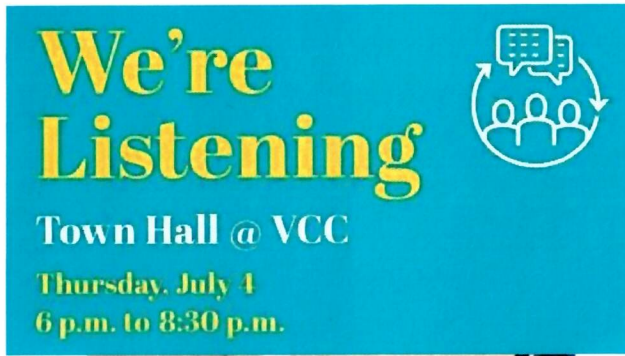
Engagement Findings:

Key insights from the community include:

- Lack of education and awareness among the community
- Improvements in the built environment to retrofit and invest in infrastructure at intersections, city facilities, sidewalks and public spaces
- Difficulty to participate in City activities and events due to issues with technology and presentation of materials
- Recognition of the services and community created by agencies such as the Disability Resource Centre and Canadian National Institute for the Blind.
- Issues around the number and location of accessible parking spots and accessibility in City parkades
- Lack of representation of disabilities among City staff and/or advisory committees
- Recognition of improvements in Transit but still room for improvement
- Challenges of accessing private businesses due to physical barriers, scent sensitives and etiquette of employees
- The desire to participate in recreational programs but unaware of ability to accommodate

Staff took the time to review specific suggestions provided by community members to determine how they could potentially integrate with the Framework and/or Multi-Year Action Plan. Details of key findings from public consultation is included in the Appendices.

Examples of Promotional Materials & Event Photos



Appendices

- 2017 Survey Key Findings
- November 2018 Agency Partner Workshop
- July Focus Group Findings

2017 Survey Highlights and Key Takeaways

In 2017, an accessibility survey was conducted by the City of Victoria as part of Phase 1 to developing an Accessibility Framework for the City. The bullets below represent the key takeaways and highlights provided by members of the public in Victoria.

Key takeaways:

The largest age group to have responded in the survey was 36-55 years old

- Both mobility and energy and endurance represented the functions most affected by a person's disability
- The top accessibility barriers related back to infrastructure concerns including stairs, issues with sidewalks and curbs, as well as entrance to establishments
- Mobility and infrastructure concerns will need to be an important component in further analysis given their frequency in the survey results
- Future public consultations will need to incorporate innovative techniques to lower accessibility barriers identified in this survey
- An estimated 33.8% represented those who wanted to visit and enjoy City owned/run facilities/amenities but are unable to do so because of an accessibility barrier
- Most people were able to enjoy the following spaces: beaches, Inner Harbour, free events such as concerts and festivals, Greater Victoria Library, Community centres and seniors centres, McPherson and Royal Theatres, Save on Foods Memorial Arena, and Victoria Conference Center
- Most people chose not to visit the following spaces: City Hall, outdoor sports facilities, Crystal Pool and Fitness Centre, Royal Athletic Park, and Crystal Garden
- The increasing awareness and education of non-visible disabilities that greatly impact many residents ability to participate and move around the City
- It is worth exploring what are some of the best practices in the places where people answered they can enjoy and what are some of the challenges in the spaces people choose not to visit

Survey Highlights

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| Total number of surveys collated: | 188 |
| People who identified as having a disability: | 143 people (77.7% of respondents) |
| Respondents who were a representative of a friend or family member who has a disability: | 37 (20% of respondents) |

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| Person's age group/the age of the person being assisted: | |
| 36-55 years | 35.14% |
| 56-74 years | 29.1% |

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| Functions most affected by the person's disability (included respondents who have concurrent functions): | | | |
| Mobility | 68.7% | Seeing | 31.3% |
| Energy and endurance | 45% | Dexterity | 30.7% |

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| Top accessibility barriers faced in the City of Victoria (respondents selected multiple options): | | | |
| Stairs | 57.14% | Obstacles on the sidewalks | 55.19% |
| Problems with curb cuts | 55.84% | Poor conditions of sidewalks | 55.19% |
| Accessing the entrance to shops and businesses | 46.1% | | |

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| Activities presenting accessibility barriers (respondents selected multiple options): | | | |
| Participating in public consultations | 42.37% | Paying bills or doing other business at City Hall | 32.20% |
| Using City on-line services | 35.59% | Voting | 32.20% |

| Getting around the City: | Able to attend and enjoy | Choose not to attend | Want to visit and enjoy but unable to |
|---|--------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------------|
| City owned/run facilities/amenities: | 65.50% | | 33.80% |
| Outdoor sports facilities: | | 43.18% | |
| Beaches: | 43.60% | | 43.60% |
| Inner Harbour: | 70.00% | | |
| Free events such as concerts and festivals: | 46.20% | | 34.09% |
| Greater Victoria Library: | 74.26% | | |
| City Hall: | 40.48% | 48.40% | |
| Crystal Pool and Fitness Centre: | | 54.33% | |
| Community centres and seniors centres: | 56.15% | 35.80% | |
| McPherson and Royal Theatres: | 45.97% | | 31.45% |
| Save on Foods Memorial Arena: | 50.4% | 32.80% | |
| Royal Athletic Park: | 32.79% | 54.92% | |
| Victoria Conference Center: | 44.80% | 42.40% | |
| Crystal Garden: | 30.15% | 60.17% | |

Accessibility Framework Development – November 2018 Focus Group – Summary & Findings

Purpose: To gather input from various internal and external stakeholder groups to capture a clear understanding of the accessibility needs of Victoria citizens and ensure that the perspectives of all stakeholders are respectfully represented in the accessibility framework

Questions Asked:

- What type of accessibility barriers do people with disabilities face in Victoria?
- What suggestions do you have to improve accessibility and inclusion with the City of Victoria?
- What do you see as the most important (urgent) accessibility gaps that should be addressed immediately by the City?
- How can your organization support the City in planning and implementing such improvements to accessibility and inclusion?

Key Findings:

- Parking spots do not have any real standards and are limited in number
- Accessible pedestrian signals do not provide any wayfinding information for those who are visually disabled.
- There is lack of information on how someone who is blind and with limited sight could find a transit stop.
- Aggressive flashing lights from bikes can be barrier to those who are sensitive towards lights.
- People are not aware of the right language and terminology that ought to be used when talking to a person with a disability.
- No training is provided to the front-line city workers especially those in citizen facing role.
- The use of audio loop system in City Hall is positive but need to have interpreters to create deeper access.
- Gyms/libraries often use fluorescent lighting compared to natural lighting which is barrier to those with migraine
- Absence of safe sensory places can prevent families who are dealing with neurological issues
- Such as autism from attending public events.

Accessibility Framework Development - July 2019 Focus Groups – Summary & Findings

Purpose: Co-creating the Framework with people with lived experiences is what will ensure its long-term relevance and sustainability. Following the “nothing about us without us” principle, we will be engaging with different groups within the community to ensure that we gather a variety of perspectives and experiences to learn from. The goal is to meet people where they are at by engaging with them wherever they feel most comfortable. This is likely to build trust quickly and enable open and honest conversation about their needs, experiences, and what they understand to be some major challenges and areas of opportunity.

Question 1: Tell us about the places, services or people in Victoria that bring you joy and make your day to day easier?

- Walkability of Cook Street Village
- Parks and walkways that are accessible
- Thrifty Foods (Fairfield)
- Police officers that handle tough situations well
- CNIB training to increase independence
- Staff operating the Cook Street Village Activity Centre and easy access to centre
- Downtown merchants
- Upswing with private and public sector staff being of assistance

- Competency of people's willingness to interact with visually impaired
- YMCA have helpful, positive staff
- Transit is improving and listening to complaints
- Grocery shopping (aisle space; check-out; staff)
- Disability Resource Centre
- Audible Crossings and Bus Stops
- Pacific Training Centre for the Blind
- Royal BC Museum
- Exercise, cycling, bike lanes
- Digital Resource Guides (i.e. Recreation and Leisure Guide for those with disabilities)
- NGOs for residents with disabilities
- Ogden Point Breakwater
- Recreation Integration Victoria's database
- The ability to work in the community with disabilities and with others with disabilities

Question 2: Are there parts of your day that you find challenging outside of your home? If so, can you describe what they are?

- Bikes can be problematic for visual impairments
- Lack of awareness and education (rules of the road; bells; enforcement; safety; stopping at the stop lines)
- Accessible parking availability
- Urban Design considerations (paint, pavers, lights) that cause "vertigo"
- Finding accessible washrooms and using washrooms with scooter
- Curb cuts
- Evaluating new spaces/stores
- Heavy doors to access public washrooms and buildings
- Construction contractors need to be trained and aware of disabilities
- Accessible taxi's for wheelchairs
- Buses can lack accommodation that can relate to multiple pass overs
- Restaurant owners use table cleaner chemicals that impact scent sensitivities
- Charging stations in public spaces for scooters
- Ensure proper repair and clean-up for tripping hazard
- Sandwich boards (enforcement)
- Wheelchair beach access
- Human Rights accommodations so that not everyone has to go to the same service centre (feelings of safety when homeless populations share service centres with other vulnerable groups)
- Difficultly hearing audible crossings on loud/busy streets and audible bus stop warnings
- VicPD process to report incidents is difficult for the blind
- Public etiquette for people with white canes and service dogs

- Bike parking causing barriers at entrances
- Snow removal
- Service industry staff lacking training on disabilities
- Etiquette of those in power chairs
- Employment in the City – need diversity of abilities
- Lack of consistency on City street features

Question 3: What changes have you observed in Victoria over the past ten years? Do these make life easier or harder?

- Bike lanes
 - Street space; sidewalk space
 - Parking
 - Crossing the street
 - No curb cuts
 - Cyclist not using lanes
- Pathways through Parks
 - Walkers do not work on grass, gravel, etc. which limits where you can go
- AWG/City collaboration
- Pollution and exhaust fumes
 - Air quality, especially in traffic
 - Affects time of day to go in public
- Collective will of City staff & Council to address accessibility is much higher
- Homeless and drug issues are worsening in downtown core
- Accessibility, accommodation & customer service/interface has improved
- Changes in attitudes and adaptations to people with disabilities
- Challenges from growing tourism industry
- Improvement to public washrooms – more automatic features
- Bus fleet almost 100% accessible bus but crowding is an issue
- Pedestrian crossing in Burnside community
- Construction sites worsening – social safety, training for contractors

Question 4: Do you find it easy or difficult to participate in civic life, meet with friends and family or connect with the community? Why is it difficult? Why is it easy?

- Not enough accessible parking at public events and celebrations
- Events at the Victoria Conference Centre – not a reasonably accessible location
- Cost of parking to attend events at City Hall
- Parking at parkades – “lot is full” messaging is not related to handicap parking
- Access to beach and bathrooms
- Incentives for developers to go beyond basic building standard/code
- Enforcing Building Code for universal design
- Unaware of how to be involved in city recreation activities
- Forms to submit and prove disability causing major barriers
- Services/resources that better integrate multiple disability (so many limited to one specific)

Question 5: How can the City continue to support persons with disabilities?

- All ages and abilities network mandate/mission
- Washroom accessible & labeled (wheelchairs)
- Ensure stairs have markers for visual impairment
- Employing more people with disability for their expertise and experience
- Communicating with other municipalities for consistency
- Keep the conversation on accessibility going
- Committed consistency through leadership changes that tracks progress
- AWG seat that represents across disabilities
- If you accept federal money – you should look at accessibility incorporated into project
- Awareness that anybody can suddenly have a disability (temporary or permanent)
- Organize more focus groups/engagement that is accessible
- Awareness campaign for using sidewalk space