

# Accessibility Framework: Engagement Summary

July 2020

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## Summary of Findings:

Staff completed the final phase of public engagement between December 2019 and February 2020. Activities included:

- Distribution of draft materials and document review with 13 local and provincial disability service and advocacy organizations.
- Two meetings with members of the Accessibility Working Group to review content, feedback and ideas.
- Posting of materials on the City's engagement website, including a video presentation with closed captioning describing the Framework and inviting public feedback.
- Promotion on the City's accessibility-focused stakeholder list (110 people).
- A public open house with approximately 45 participants, with all materials also available online.
- In-person meetings, telephone calls and email correspondence with individuals with lived experience.

Key themes from the final phase of engagement included:

Theme	Key Insights
<b>Accessibility in Design</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Support for universal design principles applied to City programs, infrastructure, special events and initiatives.</li><li>- Support for continued retrofits in the built environment - particularly barrier free sidewalks in neighbourhoods and obstruction removal / prevention in the downtown core.</li><li>- Support for increased investments in accessibility features in the Victoria Conference Centre, community centres and playgrounds.</li><li>- Support for barrier-free parking stall design, diverse locations and pricing policies.</li><li>- The need to continue advocacy with senior levels of government to increase the accessibility of commercial, institutional and residential buildings (beyond current codes and standards).</li></ul>
<b>City Leadership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Support for increasing participation among the disability community in City processes and programs.</li><li>- The opportunity to use the Framework as an example for other municipalities in the region.</li><li>- The economic development potential resulting from accessible tourism activities.</li><li>- The role of the business community in removing barriers and providing employment opportunities for people with disabilities.</li><li>- Support for training to improve education and build awareness across City departments.</li></ul>
<b>Connection to Other Equity Issues</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- The link between quality of life for people with disabilities and housing affordability / diversity in Victoria and the region.</li><li>- The positive health-related outcomes of improved accessibility and how investing in accessibility can reduce isolation and increase sense of belonging.</li></ul>


<b>Accessible Communications</b>	- The need to be adaptable and flexible with communications; ensuring that information is available in multiple and formats.
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More details on the engagement process and findings can be found in the subsequent pages.

## 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. To reach a detailed understanding of accessibility in Victoria, the City has undergone multiple phases of public and stakeholder engagement in the sphere of inclusion. For this final phase of public engagement of the Accessibility Framework, the City has used techniques of *consult and inform*, as identified in the spectrum of public participation.

This summary focuses on the final phase of engagement.

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 and engagement portal
- Social media channels with targeted advertisements
- Direct email invitation distributed to 110 people
- Through invites by Community Associations

The consultation process included:

- Distribution of draft materials to 13 local and provincial disability service and advocacy organizations
- A public open house with approximately 35 participants
- Correspondence submitted to the City through email, telephone and in-person discussions
- Two meetings with members of the Accessibility Working Group to review content, suggestions and ideas
- Posting of materials on the City's engagement website, including video presentation with closed captioning describing the Framework and inviting public feedback
- Request for feedback from the City's stakeholder list (110 people).

## **What we did:**

### **November 2019:**

- Accessibility Working Group meeting to discuss further recommendations to Framework draft materials
- Distribution of draft materials to local and Provincial disability and advocacy organizations

### **January 2020**

- Engagement portal uploaded with up-to-date materials, including a video presentation with closed captioning describing the Framework and inviting public feedback
- Promotion of portal and engagement opportunities through the City's stakeholder list and Community Associations
- Accessibility Working Group meeting to discuss final recommendations to the Action Plan

### **February 2020**

- Public Open House at the Cook Street Village Activity Centre with display boarders, American Sign Language interpreters, and laptops available for screen-reading abilities.

## **Engagement Findings:**

Key insights from the community include:

### **Leadership:**

- The benefit of having an accessibility policy and framework that sets direction for the City and can be used as an example for other communities in the region
- Importance of having a policy and framework, but ensuring that it can be measurable and enforceable
- Economic development potential from accessible tourism activities
- The role of the business community in removing barriers and providing employment opportunities
- Support for training and hiring, which improves education and builds awareness across City departments and services



- The key to success of the framework is the plan in place to share information and best accessibility practices with all municipalities within the Greater Victoria area.

#### Connections to Other Equity Issues:

- Observations on the link between quality of life for people with disabilities and housing affordability / diversity in the municipality
- Emphasis on health outcomes with improved accessibility – investing in accessibility can reduce isolation and increase sense of belonging

#### Accessibility in Design:

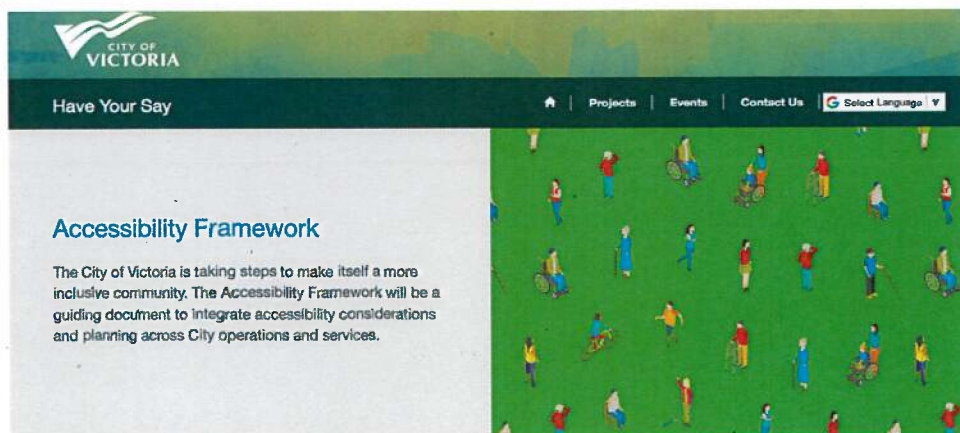
- Support for universal design principles, including the design of City programs and initiatives.
- Support for continued retrofits in the built environment, particularly for barrier free sidewalks, updated parking stall designs and pricing policies, and accessibility features in community centres and playgrounds.
- A need for continued advocacy with senior levels of government to implement updated design standards and programs to support barrier free commercial, institutional and residential buildings
- Importance of addressing barriers to disabilities other than mobility, such as environmental sensitivities, brain injuries or allergies.

#### Accessible Communication:

- The City's need to be adaptable and work to respond in a flexible way, including ensuring that information is available in multiple and alternate formats.

Staff took the time to review specific suggestions provided by community members to determine how they could potentially integrate with the Framework and Action Plan.

## Examples of Promotional Materials & Event Photos





FEB  
3

## Accessibility Framework Open House: Provide Your Feedback

Public · Hosted by [City of Victoria - Local Government](#)

✓ Going ▾

...

Your response is visible to the hosts and [Friends ▾](#)

🕒 Monday, February 3, 2020 at 4:30 PM – 6:30 PM  
about 1 month ago

📍 Cook Street Village Activity Centre  
380 Cook Street #1, Victoria, British Columbia V8V 3X7

[Show Map](#)

### 19 Events

Events

Calendar

**Accessibility  
Framework Open  
House: Provide Your  
Feedback**

Birthdays

Discover

Hosting

[+ Create Event ▾](#)

### Details

City Staff is seeking input from all members of the public to provide comments on our draft Accessibility Framework, Policy and Action Plan.

Attend our Open House on Monday, February 3 at the Cook Street Village Activity Centre from 4:30 – 6:30pm. Staff will be available for discussions along with information boards, interpreters and computers and headphones set up for screen-reading.

Unable to attend? You can participate in the engagement process online here: <https://engage.victoria.ca/accessibility-framework/>

- Watch our video-recorded presentation (available online on February 3 at 9am.)

- Review the documents (available on January 27) and submit your comments to staff by February 9 through the following options:

Email – [engage@victoria.ca](mailto:engage@victoria.ca)

Phone – 250.361.0378

In person at City Hall Engineering Department – 1 Centennial Square

The City of Victoria supports and encourages participation by people with disabilities in this engagement process. We are pleased to offer a range of supports including wheelchair accessible meeting locations, on-line and telephone input mechanisms, and descriptive project overviews for persons with vision loss. Please let us know if we can assist you in participating in any engagement events by emailing [engage@victoria.ca](mailto:engage@victoria.ca).



**Rob Gordon**

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**From:** Personal Information  
**Sent:** February 16, 2020 3:27 PM  
**To:** Alannah Rodgers  
**Subject:** Comments/suggetions on Accessibility draft  
**Attachments:** 2020.01.28 Accessibility Framework.pdf

Hi Alannah

Here are my comments and suggestions on the Accessibility draft. I went through it fairly meticulously. It contains a lot that is commendable  
best

Personal Information

Victoria BC Canada

Personal Information



## Rob Gordon

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**From:** Engagement  
**Sent:** February 7, 2020 7:52 AM  
**To:** Alannah Rodgers  
**Cc:** Ryan Shotton  
**Subject:** FW: Comments on the Accessibility Plan

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**From:** Personal Information  
**Sent:** February 6, 2020 6:09 PM  
**To:** Engagement <engage@victoria.ca>  
**Subject:** Comments on the Accessibility Plan

Dear Friends,

Some general comments about the cities Accessibility Plan;

I have a son with disabilities. He attends UVic and has been actively applying for work for the last three years.

Corporate websites, job applications, institutions like UVic, government websites – they all state that they are committed to Employment Equity, Diversity, Equal Opportunity and so forth.

The fact is that whilst these noble statements are made on websites and application forms, there is no structure in place to audit these claims.

I have enquired directly at the University and in a number of companies and organizations trying to find out who in the organization is responsible for compliance with the stated policy.

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In no instance have I received anything even approaching a satisfactory answer.

That means that at the application review stage, at the interview stage, at the contract award stage, no one anywhere is ensuring compliance with the pledge of adherence to diversity, equity, human rights, accessibility etc.

A policy is fine but it must be measurable and enforceable.

What is required at minimum are quotas for government, municipalities, corporations, institutions of higher learning and so forth.

Quotas must be applied for all visible minorities.

Regular audit of the quota allocations must be performed.

There must be penalties for failure to comply with a policy. In the same way as false advertising is penalized, stating a policy which is not enforced is similar to false advertising.



There must be a simple and fair appeals process set up so those who feel they have been discriminated against can easily register a complaint and have it thoroughly investigated and remedied if necessary.

Thank you for your attention

Personal Information

Langford  
Victoria

## Rob Gordon

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**From:** Engagement  
**Sent:** February 4, 2020 11:01 AM  
**To:** Alannah Rodgers  
**Cc:** Ryan Shotton  
**Subject:** FW: Accessibility framework

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Completed

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**From:** Personal Information  
**Sent:** February 4, 2020 11:01 AM  
**To:** Engagement <engage@victoria.ca>  
**Subject:** Accessibility framework

Please consider my following comments to be in regard to your current work on the Accessibility Framework. I feel strongly that one sector of the population of Victoria that needs support is our aging seniors. Seniors could be encouraged to reduce use of vehicles and switch to public transportation through free or reduced fares or passes. If youth can be supported in this fashion so might seniors for attending medical appointments, shopping and simply connecting with friends and family. At present, to go downtown and return for my wife and I (both seniors ) it costs \$10. I can drive and park for much less. How environmentally responsible is this. The reality is; however; for those of us on a fixed income, one looks to save money wherever possible. I would encourage Council to include such support in your current study/proposal.

Sincerely;  
Personal Information

## Rob Gordon

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**From:** Engagement  
**Sent:** February 4, 2020 9:41 AM  
**To:** Alannah Rodgers  
**Cc:** Ryan Shotton  
**Subject:** FW: Accessibility framework and action plan comments - database

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Completed

-----Original Message-----

**From:** Personal Information  
**Sent:** February 4, 2020 9:05 AM  
**To:** Engagement <engage@victoria.ca>  
**Subject:** Accessibility framework and action plan comments - database

If this exists already in Victoria I couldn't find it but have seen attempts at it in other communities. Can you work with someone to create a database on accessibility to businesses? I'm thinking on the simple end of mobility access but could be expanded And could include a rating system.

I find myself with a temporary mobility issue (I broke my leg) and it makes me aware of curbs and stairs that I never have been before. What one person including me usually takes for granted (like only one step in to a business or narrow aisles) is an instant barrier to others. Although Victoria is heads above other cities, I still find I have to call ahead to ask if a business is 1) on the ground floor, 2) has one or more steps, 3) has narrow doorways, etc etc. Sometimes it's just easier to go to a mall because I know I will have good access. This is diverting business.

For example, I live in Fairfield and often shop at Fairfield Plaza. I was there yesterday, parking outside the pharmacy. Looks like great access because it's flat but I could not get my scooter between the orange curbs, they are too close together. I had to go behind all the parked cars to access at the end (wheelchair spots at the end not available). Also, I can't currently use that Thriftys because the aisles are too narrow. I would love to see a database developed that rates access to business.

Thanks for the opportunity to comment

Personal Information

Sent from my iPad

## Rob Gordon

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**From:** Engagement  
**Sent:** February 3, 2020 1:16 PM  
**To:** Alannah Rodgers  
**Cc:** Ryan Shotton  
**Subject:** FW: Accessibility Framework

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Completed

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**From:** Personal Information  
**Sent:** February 3, 2020 12:30 PM  
**To:** Engagement <engage@victoria.ca>  
**Subject:** Accessibility Framework

Good afternoon City of Victoria,

Thank you for the opportunity to engage and give feedback on your new Accessibility Framework. I am very pleased to see many of the actions you have and plan to take in order to make the City more inclusive. There are a couple of things I think are missing however, that I'd appreciate you considering.

Firstly, I appreciate that you are committed to working with organizations that work with people with disabilities and that you are getting great advice by consulting with the disability community. What I think would both benefit City Hall and the inclusion here in the City, is through **HIRING** people with disabilities. All levels of government are meant to be a representation of the electorate. If this was true for the City of Victoria you would have 21% of your employees that represent and are compensated fairly for their work and perspectives. This can be done through preference statements in the job descriptions produced for vacancies, much like Indigenous Peoples being hired into positions where lived experience and perspective needs to be considered.

Second of all, I think that there needs to be a plan in place and a commitment to share information and best accessibility practices with all municipalities within the Greater Victoria area. One of the unique barriers for people with disabilities in this particular region is the differing approaches to accessibility. This creates challenges because what one might grow to be accustomed to in one area, lets say Colwood for example, can be **VERY** different here in Victoria. This means that someone with a disability may encounter barriers they are unaccustomed to that could create confusion and ultimately dangerous consequences for individuals trying to assert their independence and right to travel between municipalities. The provincial government is yest to address this very real issue, that perhaps the City could lead/suggest.

I would also suggest looking at grant and funding opportunities for people with disabilities that need to make changes to their home in order for it to continue to be accessible and livable- much like Senior programs that help to allow them to age at home. This would also increase the accessible housing available in the market going forward.

With thanks,  
Personal Information

## Rob Gordon

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**From:** Engagement  
**Sent:** February 3, 2020 12:06 PM  
**To:** Alannah Rodgers  
**Cc:** Ryan Shotton  
**Subject:** FW: Consultation on the Accessibility Framework

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Completed

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**From:** Personal Information  
**Sent:** February 3, 2020 10:59 AM  
**To:** Engagement <engage@victoria.ca>  
**Subject:** Consultation on the Accessibility Framework

Thank you for allowing citizens to comment on the City's Accessibility Framework.

I am pleased to see that the framework recognizes allergies and environmental sensitive as disabilities (p. 8) and that elements in outdoor spaces can create barriers (p. 10).

My concern with the framework is that the goal to systematically remove and prevent barrier in public parks and open spaces (p. 26) will not be met nor will the Accessibility Policy Statements be respected. My concern is based on my recent experience with the City's replanting a tree on my boulevard.

Last December, we received a notice in advance that a tree at the bottom of our driveway was to be removed. The notice did not solicit input nor indicate that I had any say in what would be replanted, contrary to what Director Soulliere told Council on Dec. 12, 2019 when reporting on implementing the Urban Forest Master Plan.

Anyhow, in late December, I submitted a service request to the City asking to talk about tree replacement options. In the meantime, the tree was removed and replaced. I was told on January 8, 2020, that the tree replacement was Purple Leaf Plum and that the planting scheme for my block of Davie Street is Purple Leaf Plum inter-planted with Dura Heat Birch. I was told to contact a staff member if I had any questions or concerns. I did on January 8 and I have not received a response since. This does not give me any assurance that staff are willing to engage homeowners on what is being planted.

My misfortune is that I live on a street where birches and Garry oaks are the predominant boulevard trees. Both species are very highly allergenic and produce large amounts of pollen. As a result, my freedom is restricted and my health suffers. I am advised to avoid exposure to oak and birch pollen; that means staying indoors. My symptoms are severe, necessitating asthma medication to control my allergic cough. My husband, who was not allergic to pollen when we moved here, has been sensitized and now suffers too.



The City's tree database for my street shows the following existing trees:

- 10 European White Birches
- 10 Cherry Plum Trees
- 5 Garry Oaks
- 3 White Birches

In addition, we have a huge Garry oak situated on our neighbour's property and encroaching on our backyard to the extent that we had to pay for an arborist to supervise the work we had done on our driveway in order to comply with the City's tree preservation by-law.

I wonder how will the City respect its commitment to provide an accessible environment for people with asthma, allergies, and environmental sensitivities in a manner that meets their needs when those needs are not even taken in consideration when replanting on a boulevard. Remember, I was told what would be planted, not consulted on options to mitigate my allergies. Also remember that in order for me to avoid pollen, I have to stay indoors. The City could remove a barrier by replanting low allergen trees planted on my boulevard and yet, it chose otherwise.

Another example from the Urban Forest Master Plan. One of the objectives under Goal 4 is for: "Residents [to] enjoy significant health benefits from the urban forest" by incorporating health objectives into the planning and design for new treed environments in the public realm, such as mitigating air pollution, volatile organic compounds, exposure to solar radiation and ultra-violet light, mental health benefits and encouraging more active lifestyles and modes of transportation (p. 94 of the Urban Forest Master Plan).

There is no mention of mitigating allergies. How will the pollen barrier be removed if there is no recognition of mitigating allergies in the plan? Case in point - the planting of highly allergenic Garry Oaks along the bike path on Dallas. How is this contributing to providing an accessible environment for people with asthma and allergies under the Accessibility Framework and to the objective of providing a safe place for the enjoyment of nature under the Urban Forest Master Plan? How will the Accessibility Framework be able to influence the Urban Forest Master Plan and other City's plans and actions? How can the Accessibility Policy Statements apply to all City employees when the Urban Forest Master Plan does not even recognize the need to mitigate allergies? And yet the Urban Forest Master Plan could be a powerful tool to achieve the goals of the Accessibility Framework.

In my experience, there seems to be a profound disconnect between the Accessibility Framework and the City's actions. And because of that disconnect, I see a great likelihood of failure when there are great opportunities for success.

Personal Information

## Rob Gordon

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**From:** Engagement  
**Sent:** February 3, 2020 12:06 PM  
**To:** Alannah Rodgers  
**Cc:** Ryan Shotton  
**Subject:** FW: Measures to improve accessibility

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Completed

-----Original Message-----

**From:** Personal Information  
**Sent:** February 3, 2020 12:02 PM  
**To:** Engagement <engage@victoria.ca>  
**Subject:** Measures to improve accessibility

The number one priority for the City of Victoria should be sidewalk improvement throughout the City. On some main and side streets, sidewalks are basically impassable for non-motorized wheel chairs, people with mobility issues or impaired vision.

There are also sidewalks where owners' shrubs and hedges hang over the sidewalks and impede adequate passage, especially for people with mobility issues.

The number two issue should be the lack of adequate street lighting on too many side streets. It is virtually impossible to walk to any venue if one has mobility or vision problems. Couple that with terrible sidewalks and we have a recipe for disaster. My husband has both vision and balance issues and he tripped and hurt himself quite badly walking to the Royal Theatre for a performance. I challenge anyone with these issues to walk on Victoria's downtown side streets at 6:30 p.m. during late fall and winter.

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Thank you for the attention that I hope you will bring to these issues.

Personal Information

Victoria BC

Sent from my iPad