

Accessibility Framework

Presentation to the Committee of the Whole

August 6, 2020



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INTRODUCTION

Staff have prepared the recommended final draft

**Accessibility Policy
Accessibility Framework, and
Short Term Action Plan**

..... for Council endorsement.



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BACKGROUND

- The 2015-2018 Council Strategic Plan included direction to *Facilitate Social Inclusion and Community Wellness*, including:
 - Establish an accessibility capital fund
 - Establish an Accessibility Advisory Committee to ensure City infrastructure and facilities are accessible to everyone
 - Have an Accessibility Framework in place to guide improvements to City facilities and public spaces
 - Use the Accessibility Framework to guide budget development
- Work on the Framework began in 2017 as an action item to be undertaken within staff existing resources.



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BACKGROUND

- The scope of the final draft of the Accessibility Framework has expanded:
 - Engagement and Awareness
 - Election Processes
 - Recreational opportunities
 - Staff Training
 - Hiring Policies
 - Pet Access
 - Project Management Considerations
- Acknowledged that expanded scope, limited initial planning, and more recent COVID issues has impacted the development of the Accessibility Framework.



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CONTEXT

- In 2019, Council directed staff to develop an overarching equity framework and lens.
- Equity Considerations include:
 - **Ability** - persons with disabilities
 - **Age** - children, youth and seniors
 - **Citizenship Status** - immigrants and refugees
 - **Education** - level achieved
 - **Ethnic Origin and Race** - includes Indigenous people and visible minorities
 - **Gender** - male, female, intersex, transgender, non-binary, or gender nonconforming
 - **Housing Security** - tenure and precarity
 - **Income** - absolute and relative level, living wage, wealth
 - **Religion** - faith, belief systems, customs
 - **Sexual Orientation** - lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, and Two-Spirit



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RELATED PLANS AND STRATEGIES

Concurrent with the Accessibility Framework development, other equity related initiatives are underway including:

- Seniors Strategy
- Housing Strategy
- Community Wellness Task Force
- Child Care Strategy
- Sustainable Mobility Strategy
- Welcoming City Strategy
- Transgender, Non-Binary, Two-Spirit Plan
- Youth Strategy
- Engagement Framework

The focus of this presentation is on the Accessibility Framework and Next Steps



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PURPOSE

- Identify issues and opportunities.
- Provide context for accessibility at the city-level.
- Support increased awareness among employees and build internal organizational capacity.
- Support effective accessibility planning, design and operations in context of broader equity, diversity and inclusion priorities.
- Provide a Council-endorsed commitment to ensure that people with disabilities are treated with respect and are supported and encouraged to participate in and contribute to City policies, engagement activities, programs, and services.



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CONSULTATION

- Developed with support, input and recommendations from agency partners, the City of Victoria Accessibility Working Group, subject matter experts across City Departments, as well as insights from residents with lived experiences.
- Final phase of public engagement: November to February 2020
 - In person meetings, phone calls and emails
 - Public Open House event
 - Distribution to accessibility organizations and agencies
- Key Themes included:
 - Accessibility in design (retrofits, new projects, programs)
 - The need for City leadership
 - The accessibility connection to other equity issues
 - The importance of accessibility in the way we communicate



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COUNCIL 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.

- Enables the City Manager and Senior Leadership Team to implement this policy at the departmental and divisional scale.



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THE ACCESSIBILITY FRAMEWORK

- The Framework integrates accessibility considerations and planning across City operations and services.
- Includes a commitment to identifying, preventing and removing barriers in three focus areas:
 1. **Built Environment**
 2. **Municipal Governance and Services**
 3. **Capacity and Collaboration**



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FRAMEWORK GOALS

1. To systematically remove and prevent barriers in public parks, open spaces and plazas, mobility systems and City-owned buildings and facilities.
2. To provide all residents and visitors with equitable access to municipal programs, services, information, engagement opportunities, and the ability to exercise their statutory rights.
3. To lead accessibility change-making within the City mandate and promote collaborative, positive attitudes in our community.



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FRAMEWORK APPROACH

Applies the principles of *Inclusion, Diversity, Respect, Collaboration, Adaptability*

Through our core services:

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

And in our other activities:

- Leading by example
- With advocacy and partnerships



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SHORT-TERM ACTION PLAN

- Identifies several projects and initiatives to be implemented by different City departments, through the annual financial planning process.
- Identified as priorities while considering available resources, stakeholder recommendations, community input, partnership opportunities and existing Strategic Plan and other City master plans commitments.



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IMPLEMENTATION

- Each year staff will identify, implement and integrate accessibility-focused initiatives from the Framework through the annual service planning and capital planning processes.
- Accessibility considerations will also be integrated into project planning and scoping in early stages.
- Reporting on accomplishments and progress will be included in the annual City reporting cycles.



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ON-GOING ENGAGEMENT & INSIGHTS

- AWG has highlighted accessibility issues and priorities, generated ideas, identified partnership opportunities and resources to support the City for past four years.
- City staff will continue to engage accessibility-focused organizations, seek out best practices, and gather feedback from subject matter experts and those with lived experience on specific projects, policies and initiatives.



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OPTIONS

Option 1

1. Endorse the Accessibility Framework and approve the proposed Accessibility Policy as presented in this report and;
2. Direct staff to initiate the Recommended Short Term Action Plan as part of its ongoing work on equity, diversity and inclusion subject to specific project and funding consideration through the annual financial planning process.

Option 2

1. Defer the final adoption of Accessibility Framework and Council Accessibility Policy until after Provincial Legislation is introduced.



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RECOMMENDATION: OPTION 1

- Input from people with lived experiences, best practice and inter-departmental subject matter experts have informed the development of final drafts.
- Staff have engaged with the AWG, public agencies and internal departments to define a set of focus areas, objectives and actions.
- Staff will report back with any required changes, following anticipated introduction of new Provincial Accessibility Legislation.



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NEXT STEPS

- Document distribution, information sharing, webpage launch, staff education and awareness.
- Continue to advance opportunities to address accessibility as they arise in day to day operations.
- Concurrent with the 2021 Financial Planning process starting this fall, develop work plans for the upcoming year and update through the Q1 Accountability Report.
- Pending resourcing of the Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, Corporate Initiatives will oversee implementation, monitoring and reporting.



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