

Richmond Accessibility Plan – Key Sections 2023–2033

Richmond

Executive Summary

On June 17, 2021, the Government of British Columbia passed the Accessible British Columbia Act (the Act) into law, the first provincial accessibility legislation of its kind in British Columbia. As one of over 750 public-sector organizations legislated by the Act, the City of Richmond (the City) is required to establish an accessibility advisory committee, develop a multi-year accessibility plan and implement a mechanism to receive feedback about the accessibility of its organization and its accessibility plan.

The City is committed to advancing accessibility in Richmond and has a long-standing history of working closely with local non-profit organizations that support people with disabilities and community members to identify, remove and prevent barriers to participation in Richmond. The *Richmond Accessibility Plan 2023–2033* (the Plan) builds on this work and past achievements and will guide the advancement of accessibility in Richmond, in collaboration with the community, over the next ten years. As the Richmond Public Library is also legislated through the Act, both organizations have collaborated on the development of the Plan to facilitate an aligned approach, with the intention being the Library will use the Plan to further their efforts to advance accessibility.

The purpose of the Plan is to:

- Identify, remove and prevent barriers experienced by people with disabilities when interacting with the City and the Library;
- Ensure that Richmond is a place where people of all abilities, backgrounds and ages are able to fully participate in and contribute to all aspects of community life in the manner of their choosing; and
- Foster a community that recognizes and values the contributions of people with disabilities and collaboratively works to promote accessibility across sectors.

The Plan is the result of a multi-stage process, including consultation with people with disabilities, their families and caregivers, and local organizations

that support people with disabilities. The six pillars and 34 actions outlined in the Plan were developed in response to the valuable insights and community needs identified during consultation. Together, they form a comprehensive framework to guide the development of a more accessible, equitable and inclusive Richmond. The six pillars are:

1. An Accessible Community
2. An Inclusive Organization
3. Accessibility in the Built Environment
4. Accessible Programs and Services
5. Accessible Communications and Technology
6. Research and Monitoring

Advancing accessibility in Richmond is a corporate responsibility that will require a concerted effort across City departments and its key partners, including the Library, Community Associations and Societies, and community organizations. Ongoing collaboration with people with disabilities, public-sector agencies, the private sector and senior levels of government will be essential to ensuring barriers experienced by people with disabilities are addressed through a holistic approach. Taking collective action to advance accessibility in Richmond will promote a community where people with disabilities are recognized and valued for their contributions and able to fully and equally participate in all aspects of community life.



Strategic Pillars and Actions

The Plan provides a framework to advance accessibility in Richmond over the next ten years and consists of six pillars and 34 recommended actions. Encompassing organization-wide initiatives and targeted approaches, the recommended actions build on ongoing work that has been accomplished to date and respond to identified community needs. The six pillars are:

1. An Accessible Community
2. An Inclusive Organization
3. Accessibility in the Built Environment
4. Accessible Programs and Services
5. Accessible Communications and Technology
6. Research and Monitoring

As the needs and experiences of people with disabilities overlap with initiatives outlined in many Council-approved strategies (Appendix), the Plan focuses on actions to advance accessibility in the city that are not currently addressed through other City strategies. Information collected during the development of the Plan that relates to particular actions within other strategies will be shared with relevant departments to further their work.

The Act requires the City to identify, remove and prevent barriers experienced by people with disabilities when interacting with the City, including its built environment, programs and services, and information, communications and technology. As well, the Act requires the City to identify, remove and prevent barriers within the organization that are experienced by staff with disabilities. As a result, making Richmond more accessible is a corporate responsibility. The actions outlined in the Plan create a ten-year framework to effectively advance accessibility throughout the City's planning and service delivery as well as across physical and social infrastructure. Successful implementation of these actions will require the shared commitment and collaboration of departments across the organization. The City and Library will continue to collaborate closely to ensure an aligned approach throughout the Plan's implementation, with the intent being the Library will use the Plan to guide its work in creating more accessible resources, programs and spaces. To comply with the Act, the Plan will continue to be revised and updated every three years, with guidance provided by the Richmond Accessibility Advisory Committee and feedback received through the accessibility feedback mechanism.

With accessibility best practices continuing to evolve, many of these actions are ongoing in nature in order to continuously improve accessibility and adapt to emerging community needs. Actions outlined in the Plan have been identified as short-term (0–3 years), medium-term (4–6 years), long-term (7–10 years) or ongoing, with the understanding that the actions will be updated and revised every three years to reflect changing community needs and priorities.

Strategic Pillar 1: An Accessible Community

When accessibility is integrated into the foundation of a community, everyone benefits. An accessible community fosters inclusivity, increased connections and barrier-free participation so that everyone can access the physical, economic, social and cultural aspects of a community. Taking a holistic approach through ongoing collaboration between community organizations, public-sector agencies, the private sector and senior levels of government is essential to effectively remove and prevent barriers across all aspects of community life. Accessible opportunities to participate in civic engagement processes support the increased choice and self-determination of people with disabilities as they are able to engage in matters that are important to them and that affect their lives. When all community members have the ability to contribute to civic life, it enhances the overall sense of belonging and inclusion in the community.

Recommended Actions

1.1 Enable equitable engagement of people with disabilities by identifying, removing and preventing barriers to participation in civic engagement processes and initiatives. Examples include Richmond's municipal elections, City Council meetings, community consultation opportunities, City Advisory Committees and the Richmond Public Library Board. ~ Short-term

1.2 Implement new initiatives related to stigma reduction and awareness campaigns that demonstrate that the community values the contributions and participation of people with disabilities. ~ Short-term

1.3 Collaborate with people with disabilities, non-profit organizations, public-sector agencies, the private sector and senior levels of government to explore opportunities to align approaches and create greater impact in furthering accessibility and inclusion throughout the community. ~ Ongoing

1.4 Identify new opportunities to participate in and share accessibility-related information among networks that advance Richmond as an accessible community. ~ Medium-term

1.5 Advocate to senior levels of government regarding the need for increasing resources to respond to the needs of Richmond residents with disabilities. ~ Ongoing



Strategic Pillar 2: An Inclusive Organization

Applying an accessibility lens to the policies, practices and processes that determine how an organization operates and makes decisions is important for addressing barriers at a systemic level. Integrating accessibility into the organizational structure supports an inclusive, diverse and equitable workplace and corporate culture. Sustaining and expanding accessibility-related training and development opportunities strengthens organizational capacity to advance accessibility within all areas of planning and service delivery and respond to the requirements of the Accessible British Columbia Act.

Recommended Actions

2.1 Review policies, procedures, processes and bylaws with an accessibility lens to identify opportunities to support barrier-free access and update as required. Examples include customer service procedures, permit and licence application processes, needs assessments and procurement requirements. ~ Ongoing

2.2 Develop and implement a comprehensive corporate training program to increase organizational awareness and capacity regarding identifying, preventing and removing accessibility barriers. ~ Short-term

2.3 Further the organization’s commitment to advancing diversity, equity and inclusion by incorporating an accessibility focus into corporate culture. ~ Short-term

2.4 Develop and implement an inclusive employment strategy to continue fostering a workplace that reflects the diverse community, including the evaluation of recruitment and hiring practices. ~ Medium-term

2.5 Promote awareness of the BC Human Rights Code, including awareness of the employer’s duty to accommodate, and provide resources to facilitate access to supports and accommodations when required. ~ Ongoing

Strategic Pillar 3: Accessibility in the Built Environment

Applying universal design principles to planning, developing and upgrading the built environment increases opportunities for participation, social connection and active living for all community members. Staying up-to-date on technological developments and innovative, accessible practices promotes solutions that continuously evolve to reflect changing needs. Continuing to incorporate these best practices into the City's Enhanced Accessibility Design Guidelines and Technical Specifications optimizes accessibility planning in the built environment for both public and staff and promotes aligned approaches among City departments.

Recommended Actions

3.1 Incorporate accessibility improvements in the built environment when planning annual City facility upgrades, capital projects and maintenance schedules. ~ Ongoing

3.2 Review City standards, plans and guidelines related to the built environment to identify opportunities to align and promote efforts to advance accessibility. Examples include Engineering Drafting and Design Standards, Parks and Open Space Strategy, and Enhanced Accessibility Design Guidelines and Technical Specifications. ~ Medium-term

3.3 Update the City's Enhanced Accessibility Design Guidelines, including identifying opportunities to expand the guidelines to other areas of the built environment in the city, such as plazas, community gardens and sensory-friendly spaces. ~ Medium-term

3.4 Enhance inclusive mobility throughout Richmond by integrating best practices in accessible design and innovative technologies into wayfinding systems. ~ Ongoing

3.5 Expand active transportation networks that promote accessible connections throughout the community, including routes to and from City facilities, parks and open spaces. ~ Ongoing

3.6 Develop and implement procedures to maintain access during temporary changes to the built environment, including planning for and communicating safe alternatives and temporary accessible paths of travel. ~ Long-term

3.7 Explore ways to address challenges in the built environment faced by people with disabilities during extreme weather incidents, such as flooding, extreme heat and snow. ~ Short-term



Strategic Pillar 4: Accessible Programs and Services

Accessible programs and services increase participation of people with disabilities and reduce the need for retroactive solutions and accommodations. Remaining informed of new and emerging practices in accessible program and service delivery supports an approach that continuously evolves to meet the diverse needs of the growing number of people with disabilities in Richmond. Continuing to collaborate with people with disabilities and community organizations that support people with disabilities in the development of new programs and services ensures that the organization is responsive to the varied interests and goals of people with disabilities.

Recommended Actions

4.1 Evaluate current programs and services from an accessibility perspective to identify opportunities to enhance participation and access for people with disabilities, including opportunities for collaboration with community organizations. ~ Short-term

4.2 Research and monitor community-based data and best practices and further engage people with disabilities to identify and develop new programs and services that respond to the diverse and changing needs of people with disabilities in Richmond. ~ Ongoing

4.3 Explore new opportunities to increase supports for people with disabilities to participate in programs and services, including ways to streamline access to and increase awareness of available supports. ~ Medium-term

4.4 Enhance inclusive volunteer opportunities for people with disabilities and strengthen volunteer capacity to support all program participants, including people with disabilities. ~ Medium-term

Strategic Pillar 5: Accessible Communications and Technology

Advancements in technology continue to transform how people with disabilities access information and engage in community dialogue. Information and communication methods in accessible formats, including non-digital formats, that provide variety and choice are fundamental to enhance access to information. When people with disabilities are able to access information, they are better able to determine which opportunities, programs and services meet their needs and interests, and better communicate what their needs are to more fully participate.

Recommended Actions

5.1 Review the City's Corporate Communications and Marketing standards, such as the Editorial Style Guide and Graphic Standards Manual, through the lens of accessible communications best practices to identify opportunities to increase access to information for people with disabilities. ~ Short-term

5.2 Develop standards to ensure emergency and time-sensitive information communicated by the City is accessible and considers the needs of people with disabilities. ~ Short-term

5.3 Continue to remove barriers to accessing information on the City and Library websites by incorporating current accessibility standards. ~ Ongoing

5.4 Conduct an audit of technology platforms, such as LetsTalkRichmond.ca and the MyRichmond app, to identify accessibility barriers and explore potential improvements to align with accessibility standards and best practices. ~ Long-term

5.5 Develop tools, resources and guidelines to increase capacity of staff to advance accessible communication practices in a variety of formats that enable all community members to readily access information and increase awareness of community opportunities and initiatives. ~ Ongoing

Strategic Pillar 6: Research and Monitoring

Maximizing the independence and choice of people with disabilities requires a commitment to staying apprised of the issues that impact them. As new regulations are introduced through the Accessible British Columbia Act and the community continues to grow and change, ongoing research and review of the Plan will be required. Monitoring the Plan's implementation will be conducted on an ongoing basis as will the refinement of the Plan's actions by incorporating public and staff feedback, as required by the Act. This will ensure implementation of the Plan is responsive to the current community context and the evolving needs of people with disabilities in Richmond. Maintaining awareness of the latest accessibility standards, trends and best practices will also be essential for informing the Plan's implementation and overall advancement of accessibility in Richmond.

Recommended Actions

6.1 Develop a community data profile to support all City departments in monitoring and analyzing trends in accessibility to respond to emerging and changing community needs. ~ Short-term

6.2 Monitor and evaluate the implementation of the Plan and report out on a biennial basis. ~ Ongoing

6.3 Revise and update the Plan every three years based on guidance provided by the Richmond Accessibility Advisory Committee and feedback received through the accessibility feedback mechanism. ~ Ongoing

6.4 Provide dedicated resources, including staff positions as required, to support the implementation of the Plan and respond to new standards introduced through the Accessible British Columbia Act. ~ Ongoing

6.5 Incorporate actions into City Department Annual Work Plans to advance action in the Plan and respond to information received through the City's accessibility feedback mechanisms. ~ Ongoing

6.6 Research and evaluate accessibility best practices, standards and emerging technologies relevant to each City department, to identify opportunities for implementation in Richmond. ~ Ongoing

6.7 Explore and apply for grants relevant to implement new initiatives that advance accessibility and respond to the Accessible British Columbia Act. ~ Ongoing





Conclusion

With new provincial accessibility legislation, British Columbia is in the midst of a culture change that is bringing the importance of advancing accessibility and inclusion to the forefront. The Accessible British Columbia Act establishes the role and responsibility of public-sector agencies, including municipalities, to remove barriers and make spaces more accessible and inclusive for all community members.

The *Richmond Accessibility Plan 2023–2033* is a ten-year framework that represents the City's commitment to furthering accessibility and inclusion in Richmond. The Plan will guide the organization in identifying, removing and preventing barriers throughout the community, as well as fostering ongoing dialogue with people with disabilities and those who support them.

Ongoing collaboration by the City, Richmond Public Library, Richmond Accessibility Advisory Committee, Community Associations and Societies, community organizations, public-sector agencies, the private sector, senior levels of government and most importantly, people with disabilities, their families and caregivers will be essential moving forward. Working together will promote the advancement of meaningful access to meet the current and emerging needs of people with disabilities in Richmond.

Advancing accessibility benefits everyone. When people with disabilities are empowered to be active contributors in the community through increased independence, choice and participation, their diverse perspectives, knowledge and experiences are able to help shape a city that is livable and appealing for everyone.



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