

Richmond Accessibility Plan 2023–2033

Richmond



Richmond Accessibility Plan

Acknowledgements

The *Richmond Accessibility Plan 2023–2033* (the Plan) is the result of a collaborative effort made by community members, including people with disabilities, their family members and caregivers, community organizations that support people with disabilities in Richmond, City Council Advisory Committees, community groups, and City of Richmond and Richmond Public Library staff. Thank you to everyone who participated in the development of this Plan by sharing their valuable stories, insight and expertise.

The following committees played a key role in the creation of the Plan, helping to guide and inform its development.

Richmond Accessibility Advisory Committee

- Rob Sleath, Chair, Citizen Member
- Shaan Lail, Vice-Chair, Citizen Member
- Anne Bechard, Richmond Public Library Representative
- Cindy Larden, Vancouver Coastal Health Representative
- Damian Gorman, Citizen Member
- Dave MacDonald, Pathways Clubhouse Representative
- Ella Huang, Richmond Centre for Disability Representative
- Melanie Arnis, Citizen Member
- Pam Andrews, Citizen Member
- Sue Jones, Aspire Richmond Representative
- Tommy Leung, Citizen Member

The Interdepartmental Accessibility Committee

The Interdepartmental Accessibility Committee is composed of staff representatives from the following City of Richmond departments:

- Arts, Culture and Heritage
- Building Approvals
- Business Services
- City Clerk’s Office
- Community Bylaws and Business Licences
- Community Social Development
- Corporate Communications and Marketing
- Development Applications
- Engineering
- Facility Services and Project Development
- Finance
- Fire Rescue and Emergency Programs
- Human Resources
- Information Technology
- Parks Services
- Policy Planning
- Recreation and Sport Services
- Roads and Construction Services
- Transportation

As the Richmond Public Library will align its efforts to advance accessibility with the strategic pillars and actions outlined in the Plan, Library staff from the Community Engagement, Human Resources, Finance, Facilities and Information Technology departments also contributed to the development of the Plan.

Project Team

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Glossary of Terms

Ableism: Prejudice and discrimination against people with a disability.[1]

Accessibility: A barrier-free experience that offers the same opportunity for everyone to participate in their community.

Accessible Pedestrian Signage (APS): Provides auditory, visual and tactile information so that a person with sight and/or hearing loss will know when it's safe to cross at a set of traffic signals. An APS may provide information to help a person with sight loss travel in a straight line across a street.[2] APS was previously referred to as audible pedestrian signals.

Accommodation: An alteration of environment, program format or equipment that allows an individual with a disability to gain access or participate in a space, place, event or program in a way that meets their needs.[3]

American Sign Language (ASL): A visual language predominantly used by the Deaf community. ASL is expressed by movements of the hands, face and body.[4]

Barrier: Anything that hinders the full and equal participation in society of a person with a disability. Barriers can be caused by environments, assumptions, practices, policies, communication methods or technologies, and affected by intersecting forms of discrimination.

The six main types of barriers include:

- Physical barriers;
- Attitudinal barriers;
- Sensory barriers;
- Systemic barriers;
- Information and communication barriers; and
- Technological barriers.

For more details about each type of barrier, go to the section titled Understanding Accessibility on page 14.

Bias: A way of thinking or behaving that is influenced by prejudice, preferences or opinions of individuals or groups. People can be aware or unaware of their biases, the latter of which is known as unconscious bias.[5] [6]

Braille: A form of written language for people with sight loss, in which letters and numbers are represented by patterns of raised dots that are felt with the fingertips.[7]

Built Environment: The constructed aspects of physical surroundings. For the purposes of the Plan, the built environment applies to all public spaces, including buildings, sidewalks, road systems, parks, playgrounds and other public infrastructure encountered by people in their everyday life.

Communication Access Real Time (CART): The live, word-for-word transcription of speech to text so that individuals can read what is being said in group settings and at personal appointments on a laptop or a larger screen. CART services can be provided on-site or remotely, in both English and French, via a secure website.[8]

Cross-Disability: An umbrella term that describes the inclusivity of all forms of disability.

Disability: When the features of a person's body and/or mind meet a barrier created by the design of the society in which they live, preventing their full and equal participation. Individual features can be permanent, temporary or episodic; visible or invisible; range in severity; and include physical, sensory, mental health-related, developmental, cognitive and/or have multiple features.[9]

Disability Supports: A wide range of goods and services that help a person with a disability in overcoming barriers to carrying out everyday activities. These include adaptive office equipment and work environments;

information technology; assistive technologies; sign language interpretation, captioning or other assistive communication; flexible work arrangements; attendant care support; and formalized help from a colleague, friend and/or family member.[10]

Discrimination: The unequal or prejudiced treatment of individuals or groups that limits their access to opportunities available to other members of the community. Discrimination can be intentional or unintentional and can occur based on various factors, including disability.[11] [12]

Dual Disability: Having two disabilities, such as a person with a physical disability who also has a learning disability.

Equitable: To consider people's unique experiences and differing situations, and ensure they have access to the resources and opportunities that are necessary for them to attain just outcomes.[13]

Inclusive: To create a culture that embraces, respects, accepts and values diversity, where everyone feels respected, experiences a sense of belonging and is able to achieve their fullest potential.[14]

Intersectionality: A term coined in 1989 by Dr. Kimberlé Crenshaw, and built on by other Black feminist scholars, which acknowledges the ways in which people's experiences are shaped by their multiple and overlapping identities and social locations, as well as intersecting processes of discrimination, oppression, power, and privilege. Together, these interlocking identities and processes can produce a unique and distinct experience for an individual or group, such as the creation of additional barriers or opportunities.[15]

Medical Model of Disability: A historical, deficit-based approach to understanding disability that views disability as a medical problem that needs to be cured and focuses on labelling and treating people's symptoms.[16]

Multi-use pathways: Off-street pathways that are physically separated from motor vehicle traffic and can be used by any non-motorized user, also known as shared-use pathways. This may include people walking, rolling, cycling, skateboarding, kick scootering, in-line skating, and using other active modes.[17]

Neurodivergent: A variation in the way people's brains work that is considered to be different from societal expectations or the "neurotypical." The term is often used synonymously with autism spectrum disorder, however neurodivergent is also associated with other disabilities such as attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), dyslexia and some mental health-related disabilities such as bipolar disorder.

Neurodiversity: Describes the differences in how people's brains work, recognizing the variety of ways that people perceive and respond to the world, and how these differences are to be embraced and encouraged.[18]

Nothing About Us Without Us: A principle of the international disability rights movement that promotes the meaningful participation of people with disabilities in shaping policy, programs and practices to create more inclusive communities.[19]

Prejudice: Pre-judgement or negative assumptions made about individuals or groups based on stereotypes rather than experiences. Prejudicial attitudes can prevent equal treatment and lead to discrimination.[20]

Social Exclusion: The denial of access or leaving someone out either consciously or unconsciously.[21] Excluded individuals or groups may experience feelings of isolation, loneliness and/or a lack of belonging. People with disabilities are at increased risk of experiencing exclusion.[22]

Social Model of Disability: A contemporary approach to understanding disability that views disability as a consequence of societal barriers that prevent full participation. This model places the source of the problem on

society and focuses not only on physical barriers but also other barriers of a social nature such as prejudice and stereotyping.[23]

Stereotype: An assumption about a certain group and the notion that the assumption applies to all members of the group. Stereotypes can be positive but are generally negative and ignore the diversity that exists within a group.[24]

Stigma: The negative social attitude attached to a characteristic of an individual. Stigma implies social disapproval and can lead unfairly to discrimination against and exclusion of the individual.[25]

Tactile: Tactile information, signals and wayfinding provide the means for individuals to access information through touch, either by input through their hands, when using raised print for example, or information received by tapping a white cane.

Universal Design: The design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability. Universal design is linked to enhanced accessibility and barrier-free design.[26]

Wayfinding: The process of using clues within the physical environment to understand the space and reach a destination. Available clues can include signage, surface textures, colours, illumination, acoustics and other architectural features.[27]

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG): International standards published as part of the Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), the main international standards organization for the Internet. These standards explain how to make web content more accessible to people with disabilities.[28]

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.

Introduction

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. The purpose of the Act is to make government and organizations more accessible in British Columbia, with a focus on removing barriers and promoting inclusion of people with disabilities in communities across the province. The Act creates the legal framework to develop, implement and enforce accessibility standards as binding regulations that will work to remove barriers within specific areas of the community, such as the built environment, program and service delivery, employment, procurement, communications and technology. 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, to develop a multi-year accessibility plan and to implement a feedback mechanism to receive input about the accessibility of its organization and its accessibility plan.

The City is committed to advancing accessibility in Richmond and works closely with community organizations and people with disabilities to continuously improve its accessibility practices. As a result of this ongoing work, a number of initiatives that promote best practices in the advancement of accessibility have been introduced, including:

- The City Council-adopted Enhanced Accessibility Design Guidelines and Technical Specifications, which guides the design of City facilities to exceed the requirements of the BC Building Code;
- The City's recent website redesign, which incorporates current standards for web accessibility and includes more accessibility features and tools to better support the user experience; and
- The creation of a universal design category in the City's Lulu Awards for Urban Design to promote and celebrate accessibility in the design of the built environment.

Building on past achievements and learnings to date, the Plan will guide the City's approach to advancing accessibility in Richmond, in collaboration with the community, over the next ten years. The City has worked closely with the Library on the Plan's development as the Library is also legislated through the Act, with the intent being the Library will use the Plan to further its efforts to advance accessibility. The Plan outlines six pillars and 34 actions, which include targeted approaches that respond to identified community needs.

The purpose of the Plan is to:

- Identify, remove and prevent barriers experienced by people with disabilities when interacting with the City and 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.

Serving as a strong foundation going forward, the Plan represents Richmond's dedication to building and strengthening meaningful access for all members of the community, including empowering people with disabilities through increased agency and choice. Ongoing and collaborative efforts by the City and the Library, Community Associations and Societies, community organizations, public-sector agencies, the private sector, senior levels of government and most importantly, people with disabilities, will be essential to the successful implementation of the Plan.



Commitment to Accessibility

The City of Richmond is committed to advancing accessibility and inclusion in Richmond, so people with disabilities can fully and equally participate in all aspects of community life. By applying an accessibility and cross-disability lens throughout City planning and service delivery as well as across physical and social infrastructure, the City will continue to identify, remove and prevent barriers experienced by people with disabilities in the community. The City is equally committed to fostering a diverse, equitable and inclusive workplace that supports the participation of people with disabilities.

The City recognizes that people with disabilities are, first and foremost, unique individuals, each of whom has their own perspective, skills, knowledge, interests, abilities, goals and lived or living experience. To better meet everyone's diverse needs, the City will actively involve people with disabilities in the planning and development of initiatives to advance accessibility in Richmond. This demonstrates the City's dedication to "Nothing About Us Without Us," a principle of the international disability rights movement that promotes the meaningful participation of people with disabilities in shaping policy, programs and practices to create more inclusive communities.[29]

The City remains dedicated to being a municipal leader in accessibility and will continue to collaborate with people with disabilities, the Library, Community Associations and Societies, community organizations, public-sector agencies, the private sector and senior levels of government to raise awareness of the critical need for accessibility and inclusion in Richmond. This includes promoting Richmond as a community that recognizes and values the important and ongoing contributions of people with disabilities.

Understanding Accessibility

Today, there is recognition that everyone has varying levels of abilities, limitations and strengths, and that disability is caused by barriers within society rather than being the result of a person's individual circumstance. Disability can be defined as follows:

> When the features of a person's body and/or mind meet a barrier created by the design of the society in which they live, preventing their full and equal participation. These individual features can be permanent, temporary or episodic; visible or invisible; range in severity; and include physical, sensory, mental health-related, developmental, cognitive and/or multiple features.[30]

In 2017, Statistics Canada reported that one in five Canadians, 15 years and over, have a disability, with Canadians aged 65 and older representing over 38% of individuals living with a disability.[31] The prevalence and complexity of disability was also found to increase as people aged.[32] This means that for many Canadians, disability has or will impact their lives at some point in time, either directly or indirectly. For many people, experiences of disability can be part of a healthy and natural aging process and with Canada's aging population, advancing accessibility is crucial to creating an appealing, livable community where everyone can fully participate in the daily activities of community life.

The understanding of disability has changed over time. Emphasis has shifted away from a medical model of disability, which emphasized disability as an individual medical problem or deficit that prevented participation, towards a social model of disability.[33] The social model of disability identifies disability as being caused by social, attitudinal and physical barriers within society that prevent full and equal participation of people with disabilities. The social model of disability recognizes that social change is necessary to address the often unintended consequences of unconscious bias, prejudice, stigma and

social exclusion of people with disabilities that lead to the creation of these barriers.

Accessibility is about creating barrier-free experiences so that everyone has the same opportunity to participate in their community. Barriers in the social and physical environment, although largely unintended, are considered to be anything that hinders the full and equal participation of a person with a disability, and can be categorized into six main types of barriers:

- **Physical Barriers:** When obstacles make access difficult, such as a washroom with an accessible stall but no automatic door opener or a meeting that is hosted in a space with no wheelchair access.[34]
- **Attitudinal Barriers:** When people think and act based on assumptions and misconceptions that limit how a person with a disability can participate, such as making decisions about people with disabilities without including them or not believing that a person with a disability can contribute to the workforce.[35]
- **Sensory Barriers:** When lights, sounds or smells prevent participation in an environment, such as co-workers wearing perfume in the workplace or use of fluorescent lighting in the workplace.[36]
- **Systemic Barriers:** When policies or procedures are not inclusive, such as a process that only permits individuals to submit or access information through an online system without alternatives being provided or a driver's licence being required for a job when another form of transportation could be used.[37]
- **Information and Communication Barriers:** When communication methods are not accessible by people with disabilities, such as information that is communicated using complex language or jargon or materials that are only available in small print without large print options.[38]
- **Technological Barriers:** When technology cannot be accessed by people with disabilities, such as self-service kiosks without accessibility features or touch screens without screen reader software or tactile keyboards.[39]

People with disabilities are a dynamic and growing group of individuals who have varying experiences, interests and needs. Maintaining ongoing dialogue and conscious efforts in advancing accessibility throughout City planning and service delivery as well as across physical and social infrastructure are necessary to foster a community that is inclusive for all. Integral to this is ensuring people with disabilities are empowered to actively contribute to the development of the community and have increased agency and choice in how and when they would like to participate.



Advancing Accessibility

Advancing accessibility throughout all aspects of community life requires intentional engagement and ongoing collaboration with people with disabilities and across sectors. The City has a long-standing history of working closely with people with disabilities, community organizations, public-sector agencies, the private sector and senior levels of government to develop and implement accessibility initiatives in Richmond. Sustaining these strong partnerships will be important to further an aligned and holistic approach to advancing accessibility throughout the community and across the various areas of responsibility and jurisdictions.

The Government of Canada and the Province of British Columbia

Senior levels of government are responsible for the laws that govern accessibility and the rights of people with disabilities in Canada, including the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, The Canadian Human Rights Act, the British Columbia Human Rights Code and the BC Building Code. In recent years, both the federal and the provincial governments have introduced accessibility legislation, the Accessible Canada Act and the Accessible British Columbia Act, to strengthen this legal framework and to promote more inclusive communities for people with disabilities across British Columbia and Canada.

The Federal government is responsible for many of the broader macro-economic policies and social programs that affect the well-being and overall prosperity of people with disabilities, including the Canada Disability Benefit, Child Disability Benefit, education funding for people with disabilities and the Registered Disability Savings Plan. The provincial government is responsible for health, education, transportation, social services and disability assistance programs that greatly contribute to the everyday standard of living and wellness of people with disabilities. As well, both levels of government provide grant-funding to municipalities and non-profit community

organizations to advance accessibility initiatives that support people with disabilities, their families and caregivers in their communities.

The City of Richmond

Municipalities are uniquely positioned to understand the needs of community members and to provide leadership in advancing accessibility in the social and physical environment. The City works closely with people with disabilities and local non-profit organizations to advance initiatives that promote inclusion and participation of people with disabilities in Richmond. The City also collaborates across sectors, working to strengthen networks and build capacity to further access in the community. 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. The City is committed to meeting the requirements of the Act by addressing barriers and improving accessibility throughout City planning and service delivery. The specific areas in which the City has the authority to advance actions are legislated through the Community Charter. These include:

- The City's public realm, including City-owned buildings, parks, playgrounds, sidewalks, roads and pathways;
- City programs and services, including those offered at community facilities as well as other services offered by the City, such as business licensing, environmental programs, building inspections, community engagement opportunities and civic processes, such as voting; and
- City systems and processes, including employment, financial, procurement, planning, technology, communication and governance.

The City's role also involves advocating to other levels of government for resources to support community members with disabilities, acting as a convener to support increased collaboration to advance accessibility across sectors and encouraging accessibility improvements in the private sector, where appropriate, through zoning and bylaw amendments. Through this

work, the City supports the advancement of accessibility in areas outside of City jurisdiction. These include:

- Privately-owned buildings and residences;
- Public spaces that are regulated by other levels of government, such as hospitals or public schools;
- Public transportation, including transit, HandyDART and taxicabs;
- Programs and services offered by non-profit organizations or private businesses; and
- Systems and processes under the jurisdiction of other levels of government, such as Disability Assistance, education and healthcare.

People with Disabilities

People with disabilities are a diverse and vibrant group of individuals with unique experiences, interests and backgrounds. The valuable knowledge, perspectives and expertise gained through lived experience is essential to developing initiatives that meaningfully work to remove and prevent barriers for people with disabilities. Advancing accessibility in a way that embraces the principle, "Nothing About Us Without Us" through intentional engagement with people with disabilities is vital to creating a more inclusive community. The City recognizes and values the important contributions that people with disabilities make in Richmond and will continue to engage with people with disabilities to develop and implement new accessibility initiatives.

Community Organizations

Richmond has a strong network of community organizations that provide essential services and supports to people with disabilities, their families and/or caregivers in the community. Participating in shared initiatives and advocating on behalf of people with disabilities in Richmond, these non-profit organizations have a strong understanding of the needs of people with disabilities in the community. This includes identified gaps in services and barriers to participation.

Community Associations and Societies

The City works closely with Community Associations and Societies to provide parks, recreation, sport, heritage and cultural programs to community members. The City provides the facilities and core staffing, and most of the Community Associations and Societies are responsible for the provision of programs, services and events that meet the diverse physical, social and cultural needs and interests of those who live, work and play in Richmond. The City and Community Associations and Societies strive to provide programs and services that are inclusive and remove barriers to participation so that all residents can participate. This includes offering adapted recreation, sport and social programs, and working with community organizations that support people with disabilities in Richmond, such as Aspire Richmond and Canucks Autism Network, to offer specialized programs. The Community Associations and Societies also provide a multitude of inclusive volunteer opportunities which contribute to building community capacity.

Public-sector Agencies

The City regularly collaborates with public-sector agencies to further accessibility in the community and support people with disabilities through joint initiatives, advocacy and inter-agency networks. These agencies include Richmond Public Library, Richmond School District (SD38) and Vancouver Coastal Health, all of which operate essential services that directly contribute to the well-being of people with disabilities in the community. The City will continue to foster opportunities for ongoing dialogue, information-sharing and collaboration with public-sector agencies to address participation barriers across public systems and services in Richmond.

Richmond Public Library

The Richmond Public Library (the Library) has a wide range of programs and services that offer opportunities for all community members, including people with disabilities, to learn, connect and experience a sense of belonging in Richmond. Through its work with the City and community partners, the Library continues to advance barrier-free access and

accessibility of both its digital and physical collections, customer experience and services and employment practices. The Library is committed to fostering welcoming and supportive spaces that are equitable and inclusive for people of all ages and abilities to enjoy.

The Private Sector

The private sector has and will continue to play an important role in advancing accessibility. This sector provides goods and services; builds housing and infrastructure; develops technology and communication systems; creates employment opportunities; and influences many other important aspects of community life that have a direct impact on the ability of people with disabilities to fully participate in community life.



Alignment with Other City Plans and Strategies

The advancement of accessibility is an ongoing priority for the City. The *Richmond Accessibility Plan 2023–2033* aligns with and is supported by many City Council-adopted plans and strategies that include actions to further accessibility and inclusion in the community. Current City strategies and plans that align with the Plan are listed below and summarized in the Appendix.

- Richmond 2041 Official Community Plan (OCP)
- Council Strategic Plan 2022–2026
- Building Our Social Future: A Social Development Strategy for Richmond 2013–2022 (update in progress)
- Richmond Community Wellness Strategy 2018–2023
- 2017–2022 Richmond Child Care Needs Assessment and Strategy (update in progress)
- 2021–2031 Richmond Child Care Action Plan
- 2021–2031 Collaborative Action Plan to Reduce and Prevent Poverty in Richmond
- 2022 Parks and Open Space Strategy (POSS)
- ArtWorks: Richmond Arts Strategy 2019–2024
- City of Richmond Affordable Housing Strategy 2017–2027
- City of Richmond Seniors Strategy 2022–2032
- Community Energy and Emissions Plan (CEEP) 2050
- Cultural Harmony Plan 2019–2029
- Dementia-Friendly Community Action Plan 2019
- Recreation and Sport Strategy 2019–2024
- Richmond Homelessness Strategy 2019–2029

- Richmond Youth Strategy 2022–2032

The City is also working to further accessibility and inclusion within the organization by incorporating diversity, equity and inclusion best practices and strategies into its corporate culture. Through its ongoing efforts, the City will continue to promote a workplace that values every staff member's unique identities and contributions.

Additionally, the City and Library continue to work closely together to coordinate approaches to advancing accessibility. In 2019, the Library Board adopted the Library's Diversity and Inclusion Statement, demonstrating its commitment to delivering inclusive services and fostering an environment of respect, tolerance and understanding. Further to this, the values, goals and priorities outlined in the Richmond Public Library Strategic Plan 2019–2021 (update in progress) work in alignment with the recommended actions in the Plan to collaboratively support Richmond's diverse and growing community.



Developing the Plan

The Act established a set of guiding principles that organizations, including municipalities, are required to apply when developing their multi-year accessibility plans. These principles were integrated throughout all phases of development for the *Richmond Accessibility Plan 2023–2033*, which included meaningful consultation with people with disabilities as well as the individuals and organizations that support them.

Guiding Principles

The following principles (detailed in the British Columbia Framework for Accessibility Legislation)[40] were used to guide the Plan's development. Ongoing updates and revisions made to the Plan will continue to reflect these principles. Each principle has been adapted for the City as follows:

- **Inclusion**: All community members, including persons with disabilities, are able to participate fully and equally in Richmond.
- **Adaptability**: Disability and accessibility are evolving concepts and the needs of people with disabilities will continue to evolve as services, technology, and attitudes change.
- **Diversity**: Every person is unique. People with disabilities are individuals with varied backgrounds. Individual characteristics including race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and lived experience greatly inform the experiences of individuals. The Plan acknowledges the principle of intersectionality and the diversity within the disability community.
- **Collaboration**: Promoting accessible communities is a shared responsibility and everyone has a role to play. Opportunities are created for organizations and community members to work together to further access and inclusion.
- **Self-determination**: People with disabilities make their own choices and pursue the lives they wish to live in Richmond.

- **Universal Design**: Defined by the Centre for Excellence in Universal Design as the design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood, and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability.[41] The built environment in Richmond is designed to meet the needs of the broadest range of people who wish to use city places and spaces.



Community Consultation

Consultation involved a diverse group of community members, including people with disabilities, their family members and caregivers, community organizations that support people with disabilities, community groups and City Council-appointed Advisory Committees.

Participating Organizations:

- ALS Society of British Columbia
- Alzheimer Society of British Columbia
- Aspire Richmond
- Autism Speaks
- BC Centre for Ability
- Canadian National Institute for the Blind
- Developmental Disabilities Association
- inGIRLS CLUB
- Kwantlen Polytechnic University – Employment and Community Studies Program
- Pacific Autism Family Network
- Pathways Clubhouse Society of Richmond
- Richmond Centre for Disability
- Richmond Poverty Reduction Coalition
- Richmond Therapeutic Riding Association
- Rick Hansen Foundation
- Special Olympics British Columbia – Richmond
- Wavefront Centre for Communication Accessibility

Consultation Details:

To gain insight into the lived experience, goals and priorities of people with disabilities in Richmond, a number of different consultation methods were used, including:

- Four focus groups with members of the disability community, including people with disabilities, their family members and caregivers and representatives from community organizations. The focus groups were designed using best practices for accessibility, including the provision of ASL interpretation and captioning;
- Nine interviews with representatives from community organizations that support people with disabilities in Richmond;
- Meetings with the Include Me and Self Advocacy groups from Aspire Richmond;
- Presentations to the Richmond Seniors Advisory Committee and the Richmond Centre for Disability Board of Directors; and
- Ongoing discussion with the Richmond Accessibility Advisory Committee.

Key Questions:

To better understand the experiences of people with disabilities in the community, the following key questions were used to guide consultation:

- Barriers and suggested solutions to improve accessibility in the community with a focus on the built environment, programs and services, information and communication, employment and procurement;
- Current City strengths and local best practices to learn and build from; and
- Key priorities and potential actions to include in the Plan.

In addition, findings from accessibility-related studies and other City consultation helped inform the development of the Plan. This included neighbourhood accessibility assessments conducted by Richmond residents,

as part of the Stakeholders' Walkability/Wheelability Audit in Neighbourhoods (SWAN), and consultation results from the City's Seniors Strategy 2022–2032.

Following consultation, a series of workshops were held with City and Library staff from the Interdepartmental Accessibility Committee to discuss learnings and outline potential actions for inclusion in the Plan that addressed key findings and themes identified throughout the consultative process.



Key Findings



What does accessibility mean to you?

"Creating spaces where people with disabilities feel confident and empowered to live the lives of their choosing."

- Focus Group Participant

Based on the feedback received during consultation a number of key findings and themes emerged about the different types of barriers people with disabilities experience in the community. The following section provides an overview of the findings including opportunities for improvement, all of which informed the development of actions in the Plan.

Engaging People with Disabilities

Throughout consultation, people with disabilities and community organizations focused on the need for people with disabilities to have equitable opportunities to contribute to and inform the processes, programs and initiatives that directly impact their lives. Promoting their active participation is in keeping with the principle, "Nothing About Us Without Us," which emphasizes that people with disabilities are experts in their own lives and know what they require to best meet their needs and achieve their goals. Furthering opportunities to foster dialogue with people with disabilities was identified during consultation as important to increasing understanding of barriers to participation and the complexity of disability as well as implementing effective solutions for meaningful change in the community.



What does accessibility mean to you?

"Elimination of stigma through education and awareness as well as a more inclusive environment."

- Focus Group Participant

The Importance of Accessibility throughout Planning

The importance of considering accessibility during all phases of planning and development of any new project or initiative was frequently raised during consultation by both people with disabilities and community organizations as they felt this would reduce the need for accommodations and retrofits. The initial stages of planning were noted as being particularly crucial given that accessibility can be most effectively integrated into an initiative's overall design during this stage, leading to more accessible outcomes. As a component of planning, the City's purchase of goods and services or procurement was also identified as a key process for incorporating accessibility considerations, so that selected goods and services meet the needs of a broader range of people in the community.

Strengthening Capacity

Richmond is home to many accessibility and disability organizations that work closely together to support people with disabilities in the community. The City frequently engages with these organizations through City-led focus groups, discussions and committees to facilitate the development of initiatives and gain insight into the needs of people with disabilities in Richmond. During consultation, participating organizations identified the opportunity to further build and strengthen this approach by expanding collaborative opportunities among these organizations and the City as well as other key partners, such as the Library and Community Association and Societies. Enhancing the capacity of the community to collectively respond to the needs identified by people with disabilities was viewed by community organizations as beneficial to supporting the City's ongoing efforts to advance accessibility in Richmond.

Additionally, increasing capacity to advance accessibility within and at all levels of the organization is a priority for people with disabilities and community organizations. Specific recommendations during consultation included sustaining and expanding current training to support awareness of

accessibility barriers from the perspectives of the entire spectrum of disability, including individuals with mental health-related disabilities and multiple disabilities; offering specialized training related to specific areas of planning and service delivery; and promoting the continuity of knowledge for public-facing roles that often have more frequent staff turnover. It was also identified that the development of supplemental tools and organizational resources is important as this will consolidate learning and support the City's dedication to providing consistent, high quality customer experiences for every member of the community.



What does accessibility mean to you?

"Creating networks and promoting awareness of community-based services to support people with disabilities within the community."

- Focus Group Participant

Furthering Universal Access in the Built Environment

Consultation highlighted that the City continues to advance accessibility in the built environment and remains responsive to addressing barriers experienced by people with disabilities. The high level of accessible design in new City facilities and the City's ongoing efforts to improve access in the built environment were recognized as key strengths by both people with disabilities and community organizations.

To build on these achievements, emphasis was placed on the importance of incorporating accessibility into the initial stages of planning for new buildings and infrastructure. During consultation, people with disabilities and community organizations spoke of how this would increase opportunities to implement universal features and increase people's holistic experience in these facilities and spaces. Other recommendations included maintaining consistency across infrastructure, such as design, placement and availability of sidewalks, curb cuts and crosswalks and ongoing accessibility updates to older City facilities, playgrounds and parks. In particular, increasing the number of accessible washrooms and change rooms, including those with lifts and adult change tables, available in Richmond was emphasized. To promote more inclusive mobility in the community, recommendations were made to continuously expand active transportation networks. This included networks connecting to and through City parks and public spaces. Using a consistent and standardized approach to wayfinding in the community was also identified.

Temporary changes in the built environment caused by construction, events, weather-related incidents, such as snow or flooding, or scheduled services, like garbage collection days, were identified as being particularly challenging by people with disabilities as these create obstacles that impact people's ability to move safely through the built environment. A priority for people with disabilities during consultation was the provision of accessible information about temporary changes in the built environment. This will support them to confidently plan trips around the community and safely

navigate changes in the built environment. The importance of ongoing efforts to prevent these types of barriers was also identified.



What does accessibility mean to you?

"Providing opportunities for people of all walks of life to participate in the community and supporting the entire spectrum of disability, including mental health and dual disability."

- Focus Group Participant

Enhancing Access to Programs and Services

People with disabilities are a diverse group of individuals with a vast array of interests, goals, skills and needs. Programs and services that reflect these varied interests will be increasingly in demand over the next ten years as the number of individuals with disabilities continues to grow in Richmond. Advancing a community-wide approach through continued collaboration with organizations that support people with disabilities will ensure programs and services are tailored to meet evolving needs. By continuously working to identify, remove and prevent barriers, the multitude of programs and services offered by the City—from tax payments to recycling services, programs at community facilities including age-friendly and dementia-friendly activities, major events and other offerings available in the community—will become increasingly inclusive for everyone.

A priority for people with disabilities identified during consultation is to expand the number of programs and services that promote access across the spectrum of disability, including the availability of accessibility supports. Recommendations included developing more options for people who are neurodivergent, have sight or hearing loss, are Deaf or have multiple disabilities. Another important consideration identified during consultation was ensuring that program information is consistently easy-to-find and available in accessible formats. This included streamlining access to information regarding the accessibility of programs and services. Both people with disabilities and community organizations also encouraged more alternatives to online registration processes. Online registration can pose challenges for some people with disabilities, including those who are neurodivergent, or use accessible communication platforms and devices, to access programs and services.

Increasing Access to Information

In recent years, there has been a rapid shift to digital technologies, which was further accelerated during the pandemic. This has created challenges for those with lower levels of digital literacy and/or limited access to technology,

including some people with disabilities. During consultation, people with disabilities shared how the transition to predominantly online forms of communication has benefitted some people with disabilities and also created significant challenges to accessing information for others.

Offering digital communications in a variety of accessible formats and designs is important to people with disabilities. In addition, providing access to information in a variety of non-digital formats, including print and phone options, was raised as a priority for people with disabilities during consultation. The importance of making considerations for other barriers, such as language barriers, was also identified. Consultation highlighted that this is essential when providing emergency information so people with all types of disabilities receive clear updates, understand what services are available and if any contingencies are in place.

Inclusive Employment Practices

During consultation, people with disabilities spoke broadly of the different barriers they face to accessing and maintaining meaningful employment within the community, including stigma and prejudice. Recommendations focused on the importance of evaluating the accessibility of recruitment and hiring processes, and exploring customizable opportunities, such as job sharing and reduced work schedules, as opportunities to increase access to employment for people with disabilities. The City's Employment Program for People with Disabilities was highlighted as an important program that works to remove barriers to employment with the City for people with disabilities. People with disabilities also identified that ongoing accessibility improvements to work spaces, and the provision of necessary supports and accommodations for people with disabilities to succeed in their roles are essential to promoting meaningful participation in the workforce. As healthy and supportive work environments are key to promoting the well-being of the entire organization, it was communicated that increasing inclusion through employment practices would benefit all staff.

Accessibility Benefits Everyone

An overarching theme of the consultation was that accessibility benefits everyone. When a community is accessible, each person has access to what they need to learn, grow and take charge of their own lives, regardless of ability or disability. As a result, the responsibility to advance accessibility was regarded throughout consultation as something that should be a priority for all City departments and the Richmond Public Library. This included addressing barriers within the City's scope of responsibilities and advocating for solutions in areas outside of its scope to senior levels of government, such as increasing accessible taxicabs and ride-hail vehicles. With its numerous benefits—from improving public safety to reducing stigma of visible and invisible disabilities, addressing labour shortages, diversifying perspectives from civic engagements, and increasing community participation and connectedness—accessibility matters to the City of Richmond, its residents and visitors.





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



Implementation of the Plan

Implementation of the Plan is a corporate responsibility and will require intentional efforts and resources from all City departments as well as ongoing collaboration with key partners, including the Richmond Public Library, Community Association and Societies and community organizations that support people with disabilities. As part of the City's ongoing implementation efforts, accessibility-related actions will be included in Department Annual Work Plans to form an organizational approach to advancing accessibility in Richmond. To ensure implementation of the Plan remains responsive to emerging community needs and to feedback received through the new accessibility feedback mechanism, in accordance with the Act, the actions will be revised every three years. As new standards are introduced through the Act, the Plan will also be revised as needed to reflect any additional requirements.

Increasing organizational capacity to address barriers experienced by people with disabilities will be critical to the successful implementation of the Plan. Initial work to advance actions in the Plan will focus on strengthening the ability of staff to identify, prevent and remove barriers experienced by people with disabilities in the community through the development of an accessibility training program and the implementation of accessibility-related resources and tools. Continuing to work closely with the strong network of community organizations that support people with disabilities in Richmond as well as with public-sector agencies, the private sector and senior levels of government will be essential to promoting the advancement of accessibility across the community. Enhancing these networks and creating ongoing opportunities for people with disabilities to inform the development of accessibility-related initiatives in Richmond will be crucial to advancing accessibility in a way that benefits all community members who work, play, live and visit Richmond.

Key Outcomes

The following key outcomes will be used as guideposts to measure the overall impact and effectiveness of the Plan in advancing accessibility and inclusion in Richmond.

- Accessibility is regarded as a corporate responsibility and focus area within the City's thriving corporate culture.
- Capacity to advance accessibility within the organization has increased through the implementation of ongoing training opportunities, increased access to tools and resources and strengthened community networks.
- Understanding of the diverse range of barriers experienced by people with disabilities, as well as ways to remove and prevent them, is demonstrated consistently across the organization.
- Accessibility considerations are incorporated into the early planning phases of all new policies, projects and initiatives and people with disabilities actively contribute to their development.
- Richmond's community networks are strong, well-developed and diverse. They include community members and community organizations supporting people with disabilities, and take collective action to advance accessibility and inclusion.



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.



Appendix: Aligned Strategies

The City has developed a range of plans and strategies that contribute towards making Richmond more accessible for all members of the community. The following section outlines supporting actions, objectives and strategic directions across departments that have been adopted by City Council and align with the *Richmond Accessibility Plan 2023–2033*.

Richmond 2041 Official Community Plan (OCP)

Richmond's 2041 Official Community Plan (OCP) establishes the City's commitment to social equity and inclusion and its goals for an accessible, diverse and connected community through the following objectives:

- Facilitate the establishment of an equitable, inclusive community, whereby City plans, policies, services and practices respect the diverse needs of all segments of the population.
- Meet the existing need and future demand for accessible housing for the increasing population that has difficulties with or a reduction in their daily activities, such as individuals with mobility challenges.
- Provide a full range of appealing, welcoming places for residents and visitors of all ages and backgrounds to walk, roll, exercise, play, socialize and engage in healthy, active lifestyles.
- Strengthen pedestrian, rolling (wheelchairs, scooters, etc.) and cycling linkages among every element of the city (neighbourhoods, schools, civic spaces, neighbourhood shopping centres, parks, natural areas, streets, commercial areas and industrial parks).
- Encourage sustainable travel by enhancing the safety, comfort and accessibility of the transportation system for vulnerable road users, such as pedestrians, the mobility challenged and cyclists.

Council Strategic Plan 2022–2026

The Council Strategic Plan identifies the collective priorities and focus areas for City Council and allows the City to provide effective management and delivery of services that address the current and future needs of Richmond's growing and evolving community. The strategic plan works to support the Richmond Accessibility Plan through the following focus areas:

- Focus Area 1 – Proactive in Stakeholder and Civic Engagement
- Focus Area 3 – A Safe and Prepared Community
- Focus Area 6 – A Vibrant, Resilient and Active Community

Building Our Social Future: A Social Development Strategy for Richmond 2013–2022 (update in progress)

Richmond's Social Development Strategy guides the City in building Richmond's social future and cites the City's commitment to furthering community accessibility. The City is currently in the process of updating the Social Development Strategy. The actions most related to the Richmond Accessibility Plan include:

- Establish cost-effective accessibility design specifications for affordable housing developments.
- Review and refine universal accessibility guidelines for multiple family residential dwellings, and promote the incorporation of adaptable design features in new single family developments.
- Establish formal targeted approaches to increase employment opportunities with the City for people living with disabilities.
- Ensure that, to the extent possible, City facilities and the public realm, such as parks and sidewalks, are accessible.
- Strive to ensure that City land use plans, policies and developments support aging in place; examples include diverse housing forms, accessible outdoor public spaces and built environments, and public realm features which encourage physical activity and social connections.

- Strives to ensure that key written information is presented in plain English and in additional languages, as appropriate.

Richmond Community Wellness Strategy 2018–2023

Richmond's Community Wellness Strategy guides the City's approach, in partnership with Vancouver Coastal Health – Richmond and Richmond School District No. 38, to promote healthy lifestyles and wellness outcomes for Richmond residents. The focus areas listed below most relate to advancing accessibility and inclusion within Richmond's physical and social environment:

- Focus Area 3 – Enhance equitable access to amenities, services and programs within and among neighbourhoods.
- Focus Area 4 – Facilitate supportive, safe and healthy natural and built environments.

2017–2022 Richmond Child Care Needs Assessment and Strategy (update in progress)

The Richmond Child Care Needs Assessment and Strategy promotes the planning and delivery of affordable, accessible and quality child care services in Richmond. The City is currently in the process of updating the Richmond Child Care Needs Assessment and Strategy. The collective efforts of the City, child care operators and community partners in addressing accessibility barriers are exemplified through the following actions:

- Work with the City departments and sections, like Accessibility and Inclusion, Planning, and Project Development, as well as external organizations who focus on accessibility issues to:
    - Incorporate barrier-free design into new City-owned early childhood development hubs and child care facilities; and
    - Explore innovations in child care facility design for both indoor and outdoor areas that would enhance the inclusion of children who require extra supports.

- Continue to monitor funding and grant opportunities along with future actions planned by senior levels of government regarding child care initiatives to maximize opportunities to enhance affordable, accessible and quality care in Richmond.

2021–2031 Richmond Child Care Action Plan

The Richmond Child Care Action Plan builds on the Child Care Needs Assessment and Strategy. The plan demonstrates the City's ongoing commitment to expand and enhance quality child care choices in Richmond, including choices that are more accessible for children and families. The actions most related to the Richmond Accessibility Plan include:

- Collaborate with the Richmond School District to meet the space creation targets identified in this plan for school age care on-site or within walking distance of schools.
- Facilitate the development of a community Quality and Inclusion Strategy to support child care facilities in Richmond.
- Promote and assist the improvement of consistent and quality Child Care in Richmond through targeted City support and/or grant opportunities.

2021–2031 Collaborative Action Plan to Reduce and Prevent Poverty in Richmond

The Collaborative Action Plan to Reduce and Prevent Poverty in Richmond (Poverty Reduction Plan) acts as a guide for the City, Community Associations and Societies, community organizations, public-sector agencies and the business community to improve access to services and supports and increase inclusion and belonging for individuals and families at risk of or living in poverty in Richmond. As people with disabilities are at increased risk of living in poverty, the following actions from the Poverty Reduction Plan work in support of the Richmond Accessibility Plan:

- Provide accessible community wellness opportunities for residents at risk of or living in poverty. Examples include dental clinics and mental wellness-based programming.

- Develop programs and services that respond to the specific needs of demographics at risk of or living in poverty. Examples include energy poverty reduction programs, financial literacy training for young adults, and family-based outreach programming.
- Implement targeted outreach that facilitates connections to community programs and services for residents at risk of or living in poverty, such as community navigator programs.

2022 Parks and Open Space Strategy (POSS)

The POSS is a comprehensive parks and open space strategic plan that guides the City's approach to the delivery of services in parks and the development of the open space system. It aims to provide a complete understanding of the evolution of the system, from its history to the state of the current system in Richmond as well as identifying how the current system is changing and will continue to change. The strategy also defines desired outcomes so that the community will be able to continue to enjoy the benefits of healthy, vibrant parks, trails, greenways, natural areas, waterfronts and the urban realm. The actions most related to the Richmond Accessibility Plan include:

- Provide more opportunities for people to feel connected to their community and to be physically active.
- Incorporate a greater diversity of activities and functions to both accommodate changing and diversifying community needs.

ArtWorks: Richmond Arts Strategy 2019–2024

The Richmond Arts Strategy leads the City's approach for arts and cultural development to ensure affordable and accessible arts for all in addition to the promotion of inclusivity and diversity in the arts. The strategy focuses on enhancing accessibility and social connectedness through the following actions:

- Incorporate creative wayfinding elements to improve navigability and visibility to cultural events and venues.

- Identify ways to ensure cultural venues and other spaces providing arts experiences are appealing and welcoming to newcomers, people living with disabilities, LGBTQ2S residents and other typically under-represented groups.
- Invite diverse groups, including those typically underrepresented, to participate in the telling of their story in the Richmond context, through creative consultation and art.
- Work with the City's Accessibility Coordinator to identify and address physical accessibility challenges to attending festivals, visiting cultural venues and exploring public art.

City of Richmond Affordable Housing Strategy 2017–2027

The Affordable Housing Strategy steers the City's response in developing and sustaining safe, suitable and affordable housing options for residents living in Richmond. Priority groups identified in the strategy include people with disabilities who are supported through the following actions:

- Set a target of securing 85% of all Low-end Market Rental (LEMR) and non-market units as Basic Universal Housing.
- Continue to encourage market developments to be built with Basic Universal Housing features.
- Facilitate potential partnerships with non-profit housing providers and developers in the pre-application/rezoning stage of development to ensure that some LEMR units are designed with adaptable features to support the priority groups in need (i.e., persons with disabilities).
- Continue to build relationships with non-profit organizations to obtain input into housing needs and design for program clients that require accessibility features.
- Facilitate potential partnerships with non-profit housing providers and developers in the pre-application/rezoning stage of development to ensure that some LEMR units are designed with adaptable features to accommodate.

City of Richmond Seniors Strategy 2022–2032

The Seniors Strategy demonstrates the City's commitment to supporting seniors in aging well and remaining healthy and active in Richmond. The strategy's vision is that "seniors living in Richmond are safe, respected, healthy and engaged in their communities." The strategy works to support the Richmond Accessibility Plan through five strategic directions:

- Strategic Direction 1 – Age-friendly neighbourhoods that support seniors to age in place
- Strategic Direction 2 – Diverse, accessible and inclusive programs and services for seniors at all stages
- Strategic Direction 3 – Communication and awareness of programs and services available for seniors
- Strategic Direction 4 – Education and understanding about healthy aging
- Strategic Direction 5 – Planning for a growing population of seniors

Community Energy and Emissions Plan (CEEP) 2050

The CEEP 2050 supports the City's goals for equity, affordability and sustainability in Richmond and includes a focus on centering equity into the design and implementation of climate action initiatives. While guiding the City's approach to achieving deeper greenhouse gas emission reduction targets, the plan also works to improve inclusive mobility in Richmond through the following actions:

- Implement OCP and Local Area Plan objectives for compact, complete neighbourhoods throughout Richmond, with a range of services, amenities and housing choices, and sustainable mobility options within a five-minute walk of homes.
- Prioritize active transportation with investments in walking, rolling and cycling infrastructure that is safe, connected, easy to navigate, and accessible.
- Work with TransLink to increase transit service frequency and foster wider use of transit by implementing and upgrading transit stops that

are well-integrated with active transportation (walking/rolling, cycling) and with car-sharing networks.

Cultural Harmony Plan 2019–2029

The Cultural Harmony Plan represents the City's commitment to strengthening intercultural connections, removing barriers to participation and responding to the evolving needs of Richmond's increasingly diverse population. The actions most related to the Richmond Accessibility Plan include:

- Explore participation in networks that work towards building inclusive societies.
- Develop and implement a diversity and inclusion training program for City and Community Associations and Societies staff and volunteers to better serve Richmond's diverse population.
- Undertake a comprehensive review of City and Community Associations and Societies programs and services from a diversity and inclusion perspective, identifying gaps and improvements, and implementing any actions that have been identified.

Dementia-Friendly Community Action Plan 2019

The Dementia-Friendly Community Action Plan guides the City's approach in supporting people living with dementia and their families and caregivers in Richmond. As dementia can impact an individual's ability to perform activities of daily living independently, the plan works to address barriers through four strategic directions so people living with dementia can sustain both activities and relationships:

- Strategic Direction 1 – Awareness, Education and Stigma Reduction
- Strategic Direction 2 – Built Environment
- Strategic Direction 3 – Programs and Services
- Strategic Direction 4 – Support for People Living with Dementia and their Caregivers

Recreation and Sport Strategy 2019–2024 Focus Areas

The Recreation and Sport Strategy guides the City's planning and delivery of recreation and sport opportunities in Richmond by building on its strong and successful foundation. The strategy focuses on encouraging residents of all ages to enjoy the benefits of an active and involved lifestyle. The focus areas most related to the Richmond Accessibility Plan include:

- Focus Area 2 – Engaged Community
    - Recreation and sport opportunities are accessible, inclusive and support the needs of a growing and diverse population in Richmond.
- Focus Area 4 – Active People and Vibrant Places
    - Natural and built environments within neighbourhoods in Richmond encourage connectedness and participation in recreation and sport.

Richmond Homelessness Strategy 2019–2029

The Homelessness Strategy provides a collaborative, action-oriented strategy for the homeless-serving system in Richmond that focuses on advancing an inclusive community where homelessness is rare, brief and non-recurring by 2029. With various factors having the potential to lead a person to experience housing insecurity and homelessness, including health concerns and disabilities, the strategy works to support the Richmond Accessibility Plan through the following actions:

- Work with Vancouver Coastal Health and other community partners to explore opportunities to enhance wrap-around supports to increase housing stability.
- Secure funding and a permanent site for supportive housing in Richmond.
- Raise awareness and educate the community of the factors contributing to homelessness and the benefits of affordable housing and supportive services.

Richmond Youth Strategy 2022–2032

The Youth Strategy guides the City's initiatives to support youth's well-being in the community. The strategy's vision is that "all youth in Richmond are safe, valued, respected and have the supports, opportunities, and resources to live rich and fulfilling lives." The actions most related to the Richmond Accessibility Plan include:

- Increase opportunities for youth to connect with peers and develop supportive positive relationships and a sense of belonging including youth from equity-deserving groups.
- Ensure the provision of safe, welcoming and inclusive programming and services for youth in the community.
- Identify and implement strategies to eliminate gaps and address the needs of youth across the developmental continuum and during transitions.
- Continue to provide a range of programs and services that prioritize accessible and inclusive recreation and social connection for youth.
- Continue to provide youth with safe, welcoming and accessible places to gather, socialize and engage within new and existing indoor and outdoor spaces in the community.
- Expand initiatives that provide leadership and mentorship for youth including refugees, new immigrants and youth who are at risk of or experiencing vulnerability.

Endnotes

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