



COUNCIL REPORT

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No.:
Meeting July 9, 2024
Date:

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TO: Vancouver City Council

FROM: General Manager of Arts, Culture and Community Services

SUBJECT: Update on Accessibility Strategy and Multi-Year Action Plan
Implementation

Recommendations

- A. City Council should accept this report as an update on the Accessibility Strategy and the Multi-Year Action Plan.
- B. City Council should approve a new focus area and its actions. The new focus area should be called “Emergency Management and Climate Change for the Accessibility Strategy”.

Summary

This report gives an update on the Accessibility Strategy. It also asks City Council to add a new focus area: Emergency Management and Climate Change. This idea came from talking to people with disabilities in our community.

On July 19, 2022, the City of Vancouver made a plan to support people with disabilities. The name of this plan is *Transforming Attitudes, Embedding Change: The City of Vancouver’s Accessibility Strategy*.

It is also called the Accessibility Strategy. The Accessibility Strategy includes:

- Important definitions
- Areas of focus
- Steps we are taking to make changes

City Council agreed to do more work on the Accessibility Strategy. They wanted to make a long-term action plan. They also asked staff to find out what more is needed to make the plan work.

Council decided to move forward with Phase 2 of the plan.

- Phase 2 involves making a detailed action plan over several years. Staff will give updates on the progress.
- Staff will figure out what resources to use for any actions that are not currently funded.
- This information will help the City make decisions to improve accessibility.

City staff talked to people with disabilities and formed a group to make the Multi-Year Action Plan (MYAP). This plan follows the Accessible BC Act from 2021.

The MYAP has 106 actions in nine focus areas. Here is the progress:

- 35 actions are done.
- 44 actions are being worked on.
- 27 actions will be done in the future.

Staff will give reports every year to show how the plan is going.

COUNCIL'S PAST DECISIONS FOR THE ACCESSIBILITY STRATEGY

1. [September 18, 2018](#): The City Council asked staff to work with an Accessibility Task Force to start Phase 1 of the Accessibility Strategy.
2. [November 3, 2021](#): The City Council received a progress report on the Accessibility Strategy. They approved early actions to address important accessibility needs and agreed on five commitments to support accessibility.
3. [July 19, 2022](#): The City Council approved Phase 1 of the Accessibility Strategy.

4. [April 25, 2023](#): The City Council approved the rules for the Accessibility Committee, following the Accessible BC Act.
5. [October 3, 2023](#): The City Council recognized the need for an Accessibility Committee as required by provincial law.
6. [October 31, 2023](#): The City Council approved their main goals for 2023 – 2026, which include putting the Accessibility Strategy into action.

CITY MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The City Manager agrees with the recommendations above.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

People with disabilities make up about 650 million people around the world. Sometimes called "the world's largest minority."

- 25% of people aged 15 and up in Vancouver live with a disability in 2022.
- People with disabilities often face unfair treatment when trying to get basic services.
- In the past five years, reports show that unfair treatment against people with disabilities is very common. It makes up 44% of all unfair treatment cases.
- Each year, about 2,037 cases are reported.

Anyone can become disabled at any time in their life. Disabilities are different for everyone. Some people have more severe disabilities than others. The chance of having disabilities goes up as people get older.

The City of Vancouver's Accessibility Strategy is helping to get rid of obstacles for people with disabilities. 8 focus areas and high-level actions make up the plan.

The City of Vancouver is part of a culture of ableism that is common and has an impact on the city.

- Council acknowledged this when approving Phase 1 of the Accessibility Strategy.

- Teaching staff in all City offices about accessibility is a big way to change ableist thinking.

The MYAP will keep work focused on fixing problems for disabled people in Vancouver. The main goal is to make city planning, design, and service delivery more accessible.

Following Provincial Law

The Accessible BC Act (2021) says that all public institutions must:

- Make an action plan
- Put together an accessibility committee
- Come up with a way for the public to give feedback.

In the fall of 2023, the City created the Accessibility Committee and established a way for the public to give feedback. In this report, staff give an update on the MYAP activities.

The Accessibility Committee is in charge of making sure that the Accessibility Strategy is followed. The Accessibility Committee was made up of 16 people on October 3, 2023:

- 11 were from the community and 5 were City employees.
- Committee members have many different identities that overlap. This gives them many different views on accessibility problems.
- Staff members are on the committee make sure the City is accountable for its actions and promises. They also want to be transparent, open, and honest. And, to encourage co-learning between staff and the community.

In September 2023, a temporary way for the public to give feedback was made to meet the deadline of the Accessible BC Act. Community members can report accessibility barriers on the City's website or by calling 3-1-1.

Discussion

Community Engagement

In June 2023, staff welcomed feedback on the Accessibility Strategy.

- They got feedback from people with disabilities who have lived experience.

- Staff organized two in-person sessions and one online session.
- They also organized an online survey through the City’s Shape Your City platform.

112 people with lived experience attended the engagement sessions and 125 filled out the survey. During these sessions, it was clear that a new focus area, Emergency Management and Climate Change, should be included in the Strategy going forward.

Internal Working Group

A new internal working group (IWG) started in August 2023.

- It was made up of 38 employees from 10 departments and 19 divisions across the City.
- The Accessibility Committee and the IWG ranked the actions. They used community input. They ranked the actions by how much progress they had made.
- Staff also came up with steps that need to be thought about in the future and will need money or staff resources.

Focus Areas in MYAP	Finished	Actions being Taken Now	Ideas for the Future	Total Actions per Area
1. Built Environment and Public Spaces	7	4	4	15
2. Transportation Services, Policies and Programs	5	8	3	16
3. Housing Policies, Programs and Design	1	4	2	7
4. Information and Communication	4	6	1	11
5. Employment	4	5	2	11
6. Governance and Engagement	6	4	5	15
7. Capacity and Collaboration	2	3	1	6
8. Advocacy and working with other levels of Government and Agencies	2	3	4	9

9. Emergency Management and Climate Change (new)	4	7	5	16
TOTAL	35	44	27	106

Priority Actions That Have Been Finished

35 of the 106 tasks have been finished so far, as you can see in the chart above.

Here are some examples of actions that have been finished:

- Wrote a review of Vancouver's Building By-law and Standards of Maintenance By-law. It was to make sure that building managers have the plans and tools they need to fix lifts that break down.
- Changed the Parking By-law. Now, new developments must meet the standards for accessible parking.
- Changed the Zoning and Development By-law. This allows more units to be built on the ground floor without stairs. It also allows units to be built on a single level.
- Standardized communication forms and practices now take accessibility into account.
- Made a disability awareness course for staff.

The Accessibility Strategy's *Phase 2 Multi-Year Action Plan* (MYAP) gives a full description of actions completed to date.

Priority Actions, by Focus Area: Actions Being Taken Now and Ideas for the Future

The MYAP shows the important actions that are left to be done. It labels some as "In Progress" from 2024 to 2026 and others as "For Future Consideration."

In Section 2, the plan explains how the Priority Actions came to be. In Section 3, it gives specific "Work In Progress" updates by Key Focus Area.

Here are some of the most important things being done now for each Key Area of Focus in the MYAP from 2024 to 2026:

1. Built Environment and Public Spaces (15 Actions):

This focus area uses universal design principles. They apply to the built environment. The goal is to ensure access to buildings.

Actions include:

- The City will put in place Rick Hansen accessibility standards. It will apply them to its buildings. It will do this when it's possible to do so.
- Find possible big renovations for existing buildings. These could aim for Rick Hansen Gold Certification.
- Keep delivering the Universal Inclusive Design and Accessibility Program (UIDAP). Do this for City-owned buildings.

2. Transportation Services, Policies and Programs (16 Actions):

This focus area aims to use universal design principles. It applies them to transportation planning and design.

Actions include:

- Improve navigation through city programs. Also, upgrade pedestrian paths.
- City-wide programs will reduce barriers on sidewalks and pathways. They will also upgrade pedestrian access.
- Add more seats on sidewalks and paths for pedestrians.
- Upgrade bus stops for universal accessibility standards.
- Increase the number of on-street accessible parking. Make it more available.
- Explore the criteria for installing accessible parking zones. They will be on the street in residential areas.

3. Housing Policy, Programs and Design (7 Actions):

This focus area aims to make sure that people can find housing. It should be affordable, accessible, and meet their needs. This includes both market and non-market housing.

Actions include:

- Look into changing the City's Building By-law. The goal is to align it with the new BC Building Code. The Code will make buildings more accessible.
- Look into changing the Housing Design and Technical Guidelines. This is to make more units available.
- Make emergency centres easier for people to get to and use.

4. Information and Communications (11 Actions):

This focus area's goal is to ensure that everyone in the city can connect and find their way. It does this by offering tools for communication. Tools such as accessible websites, formats, and digital material.

Actions include:

- Make materials easy to read. Offer choices that consider accessibility barriers.
- Make sure that the City's internet channels use plain language. They should follow best practices.
- Make sure the City's website follows the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines. These guidelines are set by the Worldwide Web Consortium (W3C).
- Use an accessibility lens for all communications and materials during municipal elections.
- Use an accessibility lens for all communications and materials during emergency events.
- Write messages to celebrate International Day of Persons with Disabilities. Write messages for other events too.

5. Employment (11 Actions):

This focus area aims to make it easier for people with disabilities to work for the City. It will give them more chances and remove barriers.

Actions include:

- Keep giving staff disability training. Make training based on each job in the City.
- Let all staff know about the City's medical accommodation guide.

- Keep helping Employee Resource Groups (ERG) when they need it.
- Improve understanding of the best practices for inclusive employment.

6. Governance and Engagement (15 Actions):

This focus area aims to make sure that everyone has equal access to city programs and services. It does this by removing barriers to civic life.

Actions include:

- Think about mobility issues when planning events. Also, when reaching out and delivering them.
- List the Council meetings, advisory group meetings, big events, and projects needing American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters. Then, set a priority for them.
- Put together a list of accessible services and supports on the City's website.

7. Capacity and Collaboration (6 Actions):

This focus area aims to make non-profits for people with disabilities stronger. This will help them better solve community problems.

Actions include:

- Look into ways to give funds to Social Policy and Projects fairly. Also, to give funds to Arts, Culture, and Tourism. Give them to organizations that help people with disabilities.
- Help make a citywide network or alliance for people with different kinds of disabilities.
- Keep supporting non-profits that need space. Especially for those that help seniors and people with disabilities. And those that help people with mental health or drug problems.

8. Advocacy and Working with other levels Governments (9 Actions):

This focus area plans for working with other levels of government. This is so everyone has equal access to public services. And, so everyone has opportunities to take part.

Actions include:

- Make sure that the City of Vancouver follows the Accessible British Columbia Act.
- Advocate to governments on accessibility problems. The problems are found and ranked by the Accessibility Committee through community engagement.
- Take care of accessibility issues in TransLink.

9. Emergency Management and Climate Change (16 Actions):

This focus area aims to make sure that all of the City's emergency and disaster plans, responses, and recoveries are accessible to everyone.

Actions include:

- Make sure that education and emergency plans are easier to access.
- Make it easier for disabled people to get help. Help them stay safe and be independent in extreme weather. This includes disasters and their aftermath.
- Work with groups to find places that can be used in case of an emergency, like heat domes and other climate change events.
- Make sure that disabled people are helped in SROs in case of an emergency.

Please look at the full MYAP document for a list of all the steps that need to be done right away.

REPORTING & ACCOUNTABILITY

There are many actions happening across all the focus areas. The actions make sure that the Accessibility Strategy is put into action. They also help the City make long-term changes to its culture and systems.

Being accountable is key for the city to build trust and make needed changes. Staff are working on the accountability framework. They are also working on the reporting tools. These tools follow the Accessible BC Act. They track how the Accessibility Strategy is going.

This includes:

- Reports every three months to the City Leadership Team and the Accessibility Committee.
- A progress report to the Council every year.
- A report on progress every three years to the BC Government.
- A review every five years of the Accessibility Strategy's results, effects, and usefulness.

The feedback system will collect public feedback. It will go over accessibility challenges in a planned way. This will help us decide which accessibility actions to take in the future. Staff are working with the Accessibility Committee on this. They want improve how the public can give feedback. This will help the City better get, respond to, and keep track of feedback from disability groups.

The goal is to create a complete system that makes it easier to keep track of and fix accessibility problems found by people in the community.

Everyone working on accessibility at the City has to keep learning. They have to question their own ableist biases, stereotypes, and beliefs.

Staff are also thinking about the following ways to encourage people to be more open:

- A “community of practice” where staff can learn and share progress and challenges in advancing the MYAP on a quarterly basis.
- A “public partners table” to exchange information and support coordination when addressing accessibility issues (For example, issues with Translink, Vancouver School Board, Vancouver Public Library, Vancouver Fire Rescue, Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation, and Vancouver Coastal Health).
- An “internal knowledge resource hub” for City staff that could provide tools and guides for staff looking to use an accessibility lens in their work.

The City's Accessibility Strategy lays out a clear plan. It explains how to improve the planning and delivery of services for City residents. It also promotes a positive attitude. It helps people think of new ways to do things that will help everyone.

The Accessibility Strategy needs a long-term commitment and investment to reach the goals of the MYAP. The "actions for future consideration" are also part of the plan. They ensure that the City can meet the accessibility needs of all residents.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

The City will use what resources we already have to carry out the steps listed in the MYAP plan.

- Some projects, such as building improvements, may need more money.
- The departments in charge of the projects will ask for resources as needed.
- The requests will be looked at and approved during the budget process.

LEGAL INFORMATION

Supporting the recommendations will not have any legal consequences.

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COUNCIL REPORT APPENDIX A: Phase 2: Multi-Year Action Plan (MYAP) of Transforming Attitudes, Embedding Change: The City of Vancouver’s Accessibility Strategy

[THE MYAP IS ~ 40 PAGES. TO BE INSERTED WHEN THE COUNCIL REPORT IS SAVED AS PDF. PLEASE REFER TO SEPARATE DOCUMENT FOR THE CONCURRENCES REVIEW PROCESS]

COUNCIL REPORT APPENDIX B: Status of Approved Accessibility Strategy Council Motions ([RTS 14734](#))

COUNCIL DIRECTION	STATUS UPDATE
<p>F. THAT Council authorize the Director of Legal Services to prepare and bring forward for enactment amendments to the Parking By-law No. 6059 generally as presented in Appendices C and D of the Report dated July 8, 2022, entitled “Report on the Accessibility Strategy – Phase I” to advance City standards for accessible parking in new developments</p>	<p>COMPLETE</p> <p>This by-law was enacted and came into effect on December 6, 2022 (See Council minutes)</p>
<p>G. THAT Council refer the Accessibility Strategy as outlined in the Report dated July 8, 2022, entitled “Report on the Accessibility Strategy – Phase I” to Vancouver Public Library Board, the Vancouver Police Board, and the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation, and encourage these boards to adopt policy aligned with the Strategy</p>	<p>REFERRALS COMPLETE</p> <p>ADDITIONAL UPDATES:</p> <p>On November 23, 2022, the Vancouver Public Library Board endorsed the City of Vancouver’s commitments to reducing barriers and increasing accessibility in “<i>Transforming Attitudes, Embedding Change: The City of Vancouver’s Accessibility Strategy – Phase 1</i>” and directed staff to use these commitments to guide the development of the accessibility plan required under the Accessible BC Act.</p> <p>The Vancouver Board of Parks is currently in a recruitment process to hire an Accessibility Planner to assist with the adoption and implementation of the Accessibility Strategy. Accessibility remains a high priority for the Park Board through the economic policy - Leisure Access Program (LAP), services provided in Adapted Recreation and park accessibility.</p> <p>The Vancouver Police Department (VPD) is aware of the City’s Accessibility Strategy. Following this, the VPD provided a comprehensive update on accessibility at a Fall public meeting. They are working actively to put the City’s Accessibility Strategy into action and continue to monitor and review all</p>

	<p>applicable policy recommendations and guidelines. In August 2023, the VPD formed an internal Accessibility Committee in accordance with the <i>Accessible BC Act</i>. A preliminary VPD Accessibility Plan has been drafted and will continue to be refined by the VPD Accessibility Committee. VPD is committed to champion accessibility and eliminate barriers, both for VPD employees and for the public.</p>
<p>H. That Council endorse the continuation of the Accessibility Strategy Task Force to advise staff on the further development and implementation of this strategy until the legislatively mandated Accessibility Committee is established.</p>	<p>COMPLETE</p> <p>Staff delivered a report to Council on October 3rd, 2023 (See approved report)</p>
<p>I. THAT Council direct staff to conduct an audit of internal City of Vancouver employment practices with regard to Accessibility and Persons with Disabilities, that identifies the number of Persons with Disabilities employed by the City of Vancouver, and the accessibility of internal resources for our employees, using an intersectional lens to ensure they meet accessibility standards, and report back in 2023</p>	<p>COMPLETE</p> <p>Staff delivered a report to Council on April 25th, 2023 (See approved report).</p>
<p>J. THAT Council direct staff to prepare amendments to the Procedure By-law to allow the Meeting Chair discretion in allowing for additional speaking time for Persons with Disabilities if there are accessibility barriers or constraints to speaking, with amendments for approval by Council prior to Q1 2023.</p>	<p>COMPLETE</p> <p>Amendments to the Procedure By-law No. 12577 was approved the Standing Committee on May 10th, 2023 (See approved report).</p>

COUNCIL REPORT APPENDIX C: Executive Summary of “What We’ve Heard” 2023 Community Engagement Report (Broader Engagement, 2023)



Background:

The City of Vancouver has committed to develop a city-wide Accessibility Strategy and Multi-Year Action Plan in two phases. Phase 1 (2018-2022) put forward definitions, principles, and commitments towards accessibility, and the *Transforming Attitudes, Embedding Change* Accessibility Strategy was adopted by Council in July 2022. Phase 2's *Multi-Year Action Plan* (2024 – 2026) aims to confirm priorities and to ensure that the focus areas for implementation are comprehensive and reflective of the needs of the disability communities.

Accessibility is fundamental to everyone's quality of life, well-being and participation in all aspects of society, including social, economic, cultural, spiritual and political. Because 'accessibility' can have different meanings for different people, it is important to create spaces for deep listening. When the City of Vancouver uses the term "persons with disabilities" it refers to "those who experience physical, mental health, cognitive, communication, intellectual, sensory, or age-related impairments whether they are seniors, others with age-related impairments, or people with lived experience of mental health concerns or substance use issues." (Accessibility Strategy, Phase 1, July 2022) well, this term references the complexity and diversity of lived experiences as outlined above and adopts a definition of disability that is broad and inclusive.

Accessibility planning requires deep listening to better understand the diverse perspectives of their experiences of how communities navigate and participate in the city. The City recognizes the importance of engaging with people with lived experiences of disability when developing its Accessibility Strategy and Multi-Year Action Plan. Staff followed the "nothing about us without us" principle by ensuring that the voices of persons with disabilities have been centred in the development of all components of the strategy and plan. Along with this, efforts were made to ensure that individuals that may not be normally included in City engagement processes were invited to share their experiences.

In total, 112 people participated in three in-person engagement sessions, along with receiving 125 responses for the on-line survey. All results contributed to the "What We've Heard" Report on community engagement towards the Accessibility Strategy's Phase 2 Multi-Year Action Plan (MYAP).

Following is a high-level summary of the seven (7) themes that arose during the engagement process with Vancouver’s disabilities communities. A more fulsome report is being developed and will be shared at a later date.

Community Engagement Themes:

1. Meaningful Engagement with People with Lived Experience.

The Accessibility Strategy will be beneficial to disability communities only when the barriers and challenges they face on a daily basis are removed and improved. Engaging persons with disabilities from the outset and on a continuous basis ensures that they influence the priorities and strategies of the public sector, and make “nothing about us, without us” actualized in practice.

2. Increase Public Education and Awareness to Counter Ableism.

Systematic ableism and social stigma are obstacles to participation and inclusion for people with disabilities. Ableism is the belief that persons with disabilities are less valuable or less capable and often underlies negative attitudes, stereotypes and stigma which can lead to discrimination. When this is combined with other forms of discrimination due to other identities such as religion, age, race/ ethnicity, gender identity, and/or sexual orientation, this overlapping of identities means someone can experience multiple, compounding, threats of discrimination.

3. Increase Understanding of the Full Spectrum of Disability across all City Departments and Related Boards

People who do not have a disability may only be temporarily able-bodied. This may change over time, and therefore the Accessibility Strategy should benefit all people across life’s course. The definition should also include hidden or invisible disabilities. Because they are not obvious to spot, invisible disabilities may be overlooked and misunderstood which can lead to discrimination or exclusion and impact a person’s ability to be an active and engaged participant in the community.

4. Shift to an Accessibility Culture

An essential requirement of the Accessibility Strategy is a cultural shift on how the City views accessibility and models this to the community as a whole. This includes addressing both attitudinal, behavioural and systemic barriers and committing to education, changes to service delivery, more guidance to the private sector and the presence of people with disabilities in both work sites and at the table where decisions are being made.

5. Apply an Accessibility Lens

In order for the Accessibility Strategy to have an impact, the City must apply an accessibility lens which is like a pair of glasses and helps things be seen from a different perspective. An accessibility lens is also a tool for identifying and clarifying issues affecting persons with disabilities that can be used by City staff to assess and address the impact of all initiatives (policies, programs, services or decisions) on persons with disabilities. It also contributes to the full inclusion and participation of all residents and employees.

6. Instill Universal Design Principles

Universal design principles must be the starting point for an Accessibility Strategy. Systems and structures are created for able-bodied people which then require people that

“don’t fit the mold” to ask for accommodations. Adopting the principles of universal design in the design of products and environments means they will be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design. While accommodations may be necessary in some circumstances, universal design and true accessibility lessen the burden of constantly needing to request and push for having accommodations.

7. **Implement Accountability Mechanisms**

Community engagement responses roundly expressed appreciation for the City’s work to develop an Accessibility Strategy and subsequent action plans. While this represents a step in the right direction, there was also strong messaging about the importance of the strategy and how it needs to be well implemented with the appropriate accountability mechanisms in place.

This brief thematic summary from the broader engagement processes in 2023 also serves as a high-level set of draft principles to guide and support the City’s work in advancing the Accessibility Strategy’s *Multi-Year Action Plan*.