Summary of the Community Engagement Report

This document is a summary of the community engagement results for the City of Vancouver's Accessibility Strategy, Phase 1.



Picture Description: There are 7 people representing a variety of disabilities such as using a wheelchair, prosthetics, a guide dog, or forearm crutches. There is one person that has a cast on their leg, using crutches showing that disability could be permanent, temporary, or episodic. It also shows that people with disabilities are part of the community as there is one person is a wheelchair using a computer on a desk, and another person wearing a prosthetic leg running. The individuals represents people from different ethnic backgrounds or different ages adding to the diversity and complexity of disability.

The City of Vancouver is located on the traditional, unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱ wú7mesh (Squamish) and səlilwətaɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) Peoples, who have lived on these lands since time immemorial.

As a City of Reconciliation, the City of Vancouver has committed to "form a sustained relationship of mutual respect and understanding with local First Nations and the urban Indigenous community." This is an ongoing and evolving commitment, and one that is essential to our path forward.

CITY OF VANCOUVER

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A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Vancouver is making an Accessibility Strategy. This is a plan for the City to focus on accessibility. Accessibility is needed for everyone to have a good life. Accessibility needs can be social, economic, cultural, spiritual, and political.

Anyone can experience disability. Temporary, periodic, or permanent changes in functioning at some point in life is a part of being human.

Accessibility is the practice of making a place usable by as many people as possible. Accessibility means taking away the barriers that stop people from participating in society. Accessibility is about inclusion.

Accessibility means all people can:

- Access services and programs they need
- Get around in the city where they live and work
- Feel like they belong when spending time in public places

> Persons with disabilities 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. For the purposes of this strategy, the City will use the term, persons with disabilities, which will reference the complexity and diversity of lived experiences as outlined above and adopts a definition of disability that is broad and inclusive.

Accessibility needs are different for everyone. To better understand the views of persons with disabilities the City follows the value of “nothing about us without us”. The goals in making the City’s first Accessibility Strategy were to:

- Ask for and use suggestions from persons with disabilities
- Use accessible practices to create spaces for safe and honest conversations
- Make sure people not always included were invited to have their say

This report describes how staff met with community members to get feedback. It gives an overview of what was heard from the disability community. There are some messages that people felt were important for the City to pay attention to as the Accessibility Strategy is being made.

The 7 main messages from the Community for the City of Vancouver include:

1. **Engage with People with Lived Experience Meaningfully**
   Include and listen to people with disabilities.
   - Include people with many types of disabilities in decision-making activities.
   - Support “nothing about us without us” by taking away barriers to participation.

2. **Increase Public Education and Awareness to Counter Ableism**
   Teach others about ableism and how it affects everyone.
   - Understand ableism is the false belief that people with disabilities are less valuable than other people.
   - Learn to know when people with disabilities may be experiencing not only ableism but also racism, sexism, or ageism.
3. **Increase Understanding of the Full Spectrum of Disability across all City Departments and Related Boards**
   Grow staff knowledge about different types of disability.
   - Understand disabilities can be permanent, temporary, invisible, or might change over time.
   - Consider all types of disability in staff training, decision-making, and event planning activities.
4. **Shift to an Accessibility Culture**
   Make sure accessibility is important and part of the way things get done.
   - Only allow community and commercial projects if they are accessible and offer accessibility education to the community.
   - Offer work opportunities for people with disabilities to be a part of the decision-making process
5. **Apply an Accessibility Lens**
   Use an accessibility lens as a tool to help staff understand things from another view.
   - Support the full inclusion and participation of all residents and employees.
   - Find out what people need to take part in projects or events and remove the barriers.
6. **Instill Universal Design Principles**
   The City should be made for everyone, not only people with typical abilities.
   - Limit accommodation needs and challenges because of badly made systems and structures.
   - Make places for all people to begin with and accommodations easy to get when needed.
7. **Implement Accountability Mechanisms**
   Put in place ways to check the strategy is working.
   - Understand the importance of the strategy and how it affects people.



Picture Description: Three people are in this picture and they are in a circle facing each other working together. There are graphics on a flipchart that is in the centre of the circle. One of them uses a wheelchair and has a laptop on their lap. The other two people represents people of color, one of them is sitting down while the other one is standing up. Both of them has a laptop.

- Get feedback and make the strategy useful for the people it is there to help.

This report was the first step to getting a fuller picture of accessibility in the City. A more detailed study of what we heard is happening. It will include information from other sources such as reports from City Advisory Committees and conversations with City staff from all departments.

All of this will help make the draft Accessibility Strategy that will be presented to Council in Spring 2022. A larger community engagement process will then take place on the draft Accessibility Strategy to get more input from the Community about accessibility.

B. HELPFUL TERMS

Here are some terms that are helpful to know for going over this summary of the report:

- **Accessibility Strategy** – The name of the City's plan for making the City more accessible for all people
- **Built Environment** – The things around us made by humans for human activity.
- **Community Engagement** – A way of making sure community members feel that they are able to contribute meaningfully and participate fully.
- **Disability Community** – Includes persons with disabilities, their family members and supporters, and organizations serving people with disabilities.
- **Intersectionality** – The understanding that everyone has different experiences with oppression and we must consider all the things that can make people feel excluded such as gender, race, class, sexual orientation, and physical ability.
- **Meet and Greet** – A meeting held with a group to answer questions.
- **Persons with Disabilities** – People who experience physical, mental health, cognitive, communication, intellectual, sensory, or age-related impairments.
- **Targeted Community Dialogue Sessions** – Having conversations with a set group of people to get answers to important questions.
- **Universal Design** – Building places and things for accessibility so they are usable by all types of people.

> "Just having spaces to simply exist with other people. Hanging out with my friends or other people with disabilities, in a space where I don't have to worry about anything, just hang out. Even a park would be a good option, but with the lack of benches or people in wheelchairs, it's hard to get around. Just feeling like I'm a part of the community has been hard lately."
>
> *- Dialogue Participant*

C. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is important for the City to understand the views of the disability community while making the Accessibility Strategy.

This report would not be possible without:

- The Accessibility Task Force
- City of Vancouver survey respondents
- City of Vancouver Dialogue Session participants
- Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies of BC
- Citizens for Accessible Neighbourhoods
- Community Living BC
- Developmental Disabilities Association
- MOSAIC
- RainCity Housing and Support Society
- Wavefront Centre for Communication Accessibility

We would like to thank everyone involved for sharing your experiences. Our goal was to make the process meaningful, accessible, safe, and inclusive.

We also thank those who supported language interpretation during our Dialogue Sessions. These supports make it possible for people to take part.



Picture Description: Seven people are together in a line. One of them uses a wheelchair, two people are pregnant, one is using a white cane, one has an arm prosthetic, one is has a lower limb prosthetic, and one is using one crutch. This picture shows the variety of disabilities between people. Some of them are using their phones to talk to each other, and another person is holding a clipboard.

D. INTRODUCTION

> "An accessible city to me is one where I am part of the rule and not the exception"
>
> *- Dialogue Participant*

The Accessibility Strategy will:

- Take place in phases.
- Identify and remove barriers.
- Promote equity and fairness for all residents, visitors and employees.
- Be part of all operational plans and all City departments.

Phase 1 of the strategy includes:

- Getting feedback and making goals.
- Creating steps to achieve the strategy goals.
- Plan for future phases.

Providing support and guidance in making the draft Accessibility Strategy is:

- The Social Policy and Projects division of the Arts, Culture and Community Services department
- The Accessibility Task Force (ATF)
- The Internal Staff Working Group
- The Vancouver Police Department
- Vancouver Public Library
- Parks, Recreation and Culture

The Accessibility Strategy will support the full community participation of persons with disabilities. The goal of the Accessibility Strategy is to build inclusive services, programs, and places.

The Phase 1 City of Vancouver Accessibility Strategy will be presented to Council in Q1, 2022. Phase 2 will include making the Accessibility Strategy.



Picture Description: this is a park scene where people are playing badminton, children are on swings, a child is on a merry-go-round play equipment, people are moving around, including an elderly person being pushed in a wheelchair by another elderly person. There are people sitting on a park bench, roller blading or sitting down having a picnic. This picture is showing a variety of people and the diversity that each of us bring to the community.

E. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The City heard from people with disabilities to understand accessibility from lived experience. People gave suggestions to the City on how to improve accessibility and inclusion. And also how to make sure the Accessibility Strategy includes differences within the disability community.

To make sure community members could take part there were three methods used:

1. Meet and greets with organizations from the disability community
2. Targeted community dialogue sessions
3. An online survey

Organization Meet and Greet Sessions:

- City staff met with 27 organizations representing persons with disabilities from January to April 2021.
- The organizations the City met with represented different disabilities and intersecting identities such as race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation.
- The meet and greet sessions were a way to talk about the City's actions to increase accessibility and what the organizations' programs need to support people with disabilities.

Targeted Community Dialogue Sessions:

- The targeted community dialogue sessions were meant to be friendly conversations in safe places.
- They included topics such as the meaning of accessibility, accessibility barriers, and recommendations for the City.

Shape Your City Survey:

- The survey was given to people who were not able to attend a Dialogue Session.
- The survey was also sent to all of the meet and greet organizations to share with their members.

The table below shows the response the City has received from the community.

Number of Organizations that were involved in the Meets and Greets	27
On-Line Targeted Community Dialogues	15
Total Number of People that attended the On-Line Targeted Community Dialogues	119
Total Number of People that Completed the Survey through Shape Your City	89

Three questions were asked at Dialogue Sessions and in the survey. The Accessibility Task Force and City staff made the survey questions all open-ended. Open-ended questions meant people could share their opinions based on their experience and in their own words.

The 3 questions asked were:

1. When you hear the word accessibility, what does it mean to you? What does an accessible City look like?
2. What are the things that get in the way (barriers) of you or someone you know being able to take part in community life in Vancouver?
3. What would make it easier for you or someone you know to take part in and contribute to community life in Vancouver?

People were able to give any comments and suggestions to the City about making the Accessibility Strategy.

How the Community Engagement Process Worked

Here are the details of the Targeted Community Dialogue Sessions:

- Information about the Accessibility Strategy was given to people before coming to the Dialogue Sessions.
- They started 30 minutes early so people could get used to the technology and connect.
- Participants were able to bring a support person to the session as needed.
- Because of the pandemic all the community Dialogue Sessions took place online.
- Dialogue Sessions were hosted by trusted organizations and City staff.
- At the beginning of each session Staff welcomed everyone, acknowledged the land, and explained the meeting rules.
- Information about the Accessibility Strategy was given again before asking questions to participants.
- The host then asked the three open-ended questions and listed to answers from everyone.
- Everyone was thanked for joining the conversation and sharing their stories
- There were 15 sessions that took place through the months of April to November 2021.
- Each conversation had 12 people so there was space for everyone to speak and give lots of ideas.
- Each conversation was 2 hours long and people gave lots of feedback.

The following supports were included to make sure that everyone was able to take part:

- ASL and Closed Captioning for all sessions
- Language interpreters
- Written materials in plain language were shared with participants.
- Meetings were co-hosted by community organizations and people the participants trust.
- Hosts made sure that everyone had the chance to take part in the session.
- Staff made reports and gave them to participants to review and make sure their ideas were included.

The Shape Your City Survey was an online survey open to City residents from July 1st to 31st, 2021. Survey participants gave ideas to the City about what is needed for making the Accessibility Strategy. The same open-ended questions were asked in the survey as in the Targeted Community Dialogue Sessions.

The online survey link was shared with City residents; it was:

- Given to people who wanted to attend the community Dialogue Sessions but couldn't make it.
- Emailed to organizations City staff met through our "meets and greets". They were asked to share the survey with all their members living in Vancouver.
- Posted on the City's website under the people and programs page with more information about the Accessibility Strategy.

Who We Heard From

People who answered the survey and joined the Dialogue Sessions included:

1. **People with lived experience of a disability** – differing of age, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and gender identity.
2. **Family members and caregivers** – parents, guardians, siblings, and support workers of persons with disabilities.
3. **Organizations providing services** - staff or board members that work in the field of disability or other organizations delivering services to people.



Picture Description: There are seven people sitting around a boardroom table and one of them is standing up talking. One of the people uses a wheelchair. All of the people are using laptops and listening to the person who is standing up.

Types of Disabilities Reported	Participant Profiles
• Vision • Deaf/ Hearing Impaired/ Deafblind • Sensory • Neurodiversity • Mental Health Challenges • Substance Use Disorders • Cardiac and Respiratory Illnesses Cerebrovascular • Autoimmune Diseases • Hereditary Disorders • Mobility Issues • Neurological Disorders • Chronic Pain/Illness • Fatigue Syndrome Cognitive/ Intellectual/Developmental Spinal Cord Injuries / Degenerative Muscle Diseases	Individual Participants: • Seniors, Elders or older adult • Youth/Young Adults • Family - Parents, Siblings • Individuals born outside of Canada • Indigenous Persons whose ancestors have lived on Turtle Island • Racialized, Visible Minority, non-white, Black, Person of Colour or similar term • Individuals who's first language is not English • Refugees and Landed Immigrants • Sex Workers • LGBTQ/ 2S+persons – Queer • Non-binary or gender fluid persons • Persons who identify as Trans • Individuals with lower incomes Service Providers: • Executive Directors of Organizations • Staff from organizations with a mandate to provide services to persons with disabilities • Staff from organizations with a mandate to provide broad services to many people in community • Support Workers • Advocate(s) - Mental Health Community Advocates • City Employees

F. WHAT WE HEARD

People shared stories about the challenges they experience such as physical, social, environmental, attitudinal, financial, communication, and information-related problems.

Community Responses According to Planned Areas of Focus and New Themes

Before meeting with the community for Dialogue Sessions work was done by the Accessibility Task Force. The Task Force came up with 7 planned areas of focus for the draft Accessibility Strategy.

The areas of focus that go along with the Accessible Canada Act and the new Accessible British Columbia Act. After getting information from the Dialogue Sessions and the Shape My City Survey it was clear the planned areas of focus matter to people but some new themes also need to be a focus.

The planned areas of focus are:

- Built Environment and Public Spaces
- Transportation Programs, Services and Policies
- Housing Programs, Policies, and Services
- Information and Communication

The new themes that came up after meeting with the community are:

- Income/Financial
- Racialization/Discrimination
- Intersectionality
- Reducing stigma and Ableism through Awareness/Education/Training
- Rights/Advocacy
- Social Isolation/Inclusion



Picture Description: This picture shows that there are many people moving around in all directions. Some of the people are using mobility aides such as canes, wheelchairs, or scooters. Some of the people are elderly, and some are young. This picture shows the diversity of the people and what we bring to the community.

- Safety/Security
- Access to Education

The Following is a List of Answers We Heard from the Disability Community

These are people's answers to the questions about the meaning of accessibility and what an accessible city looks like:

- Equal access for everyone; equity for everyone.
- Being treated with dignity and respect.
- Accessibility is about how you FEEL in a place.
- Accessibility acknowledges loneliness and isolation.
- Being able to get around the city and participate in all aspects of society without any barriers and without needing any type of accommodations.
- Requires universal design as the starting point for all and recognizes that those that are not disabled may only be temporarily able-bodied.
- Universal design ensures that we can all participate, in all aspects of our lives.
- Independence and freedom.
- Understand ableism first before using accessibility as a tool to address it.
- The environment and its various elements in which we live, shop, socialize and work are accessible to all.
- Accessibility for all: design should be inclusive design and not specific to only one disability as we have seen the City do for many, many years.
- Accessibility moves beyond the physical barriers; it is a reduction of any attitudinal barriers that people experience on a daily basis and ensures equitable access to the SAME opportunities (not separate/different opportunities).
- Being able to age comfortably and gracefully in the community I live in.
- Having the same privileges as someone without a disability.
- Doing what we need to do in a similar amount of time and effort as someone who doesn't have a disability.
- Equal opportunities. Just being able to do -- well, I mean ultimately, when it comes down to it, people with disabilities sometimes can't do the same things. But at least give them that opportunity and give alternatives. It's just so important because people with disabilities, we shouldn't have to tone our lives down. We should be given a chance and have opportunities and alternatives available to us.

- The right to be full participants in society and being part of the decisions that are being made.
- Accessibility needs are anticipated so we don't feel like an afterthought.
- Affordable.
- Safety and security: welcoming, culturally safe spaces.
- Receiving a diagnosis and not much changing in your life.

> An Accessible City is an inclusive city – fosters a sense of belonging, social connectedness and an acceptance of diversity.
>
> *- Dialogue Participant*

- There is an understanding of the unique needs of the deaf and blind community.
- Accessibility means to me to have more opportunities for people with disabilities and provide more programs or work or job opportunities as well.

These are people's answers to the questions about what gets in your way to contributing or participating in the City, and recommendations for the City to improve accessibility. The answers are listed under each one of the City's planned areas of focus in blue.

Built Environment and Public Spaces

Prevention and reduction of physical barriers related to: housing, transportation, public buildings, facilities and spaces and commercial and institutional spaces.

- Improvements in the built environment to retrofit and invest in infrastructure for intersections, city facilities, sidewalks and public spaces.
- Plan properly; retrofitting is way more expensive.
- Understanding persons with light sensitivities and planning accordingly. Energy efficient lighting can be very debilitating and impact access to services and programming.
- Lack of accessibility requirements for private developers in construction.
- More accessible housing units, office spaces, hotels, parks, playgrounds, green spaces and beaches
- Stairs with no railings are unsafe.
- More ramps that are strategically placed.
- Consider incentivizing companies (for example, rebates) to prioritize accessibility for any existing or new facilities.

- Complete accessibility audits of neighbourhoods.
- Update the building code and adopt the principles of universal design.
- Swimming pools should have roped off lanes for blind swimmers to avoid collisions.
- Partner with Autism community and advocacy groups to design and build spaces and places within community that are sensory aware.
- Mandatory automatic door openers and accessible washrooms for new commercial buildings.

> "So if you plan for the margins, you have to talk to them. In order to know what the heck anything means, they have to put it into their head. It's such a foreign concept to them, until it's the day they experience in disability, that's when they get their "a-hah" moment."
>
> *- Dialogue Participant*

- New public spaces, such as patios, have not been required to be made accessible.
- **Places to rest and to relax**
  - > Not enough benches at bus stops and in parks.
  - > More water stations.
  - > Get rid of the anti-homelessness architecture
- **Elevators**
  - > Elevators - needs to be an accessible phone and means of communicating for people who are deaf or hard of hearing.
  - > Make sure all elevator operations have a system for safety for someone with a disability.
  - > Use of braille on the buttons.
- **Washrooms**
  - > More accessible washrooms across the city (parks, transit, etc.).
  - > Need for adult change tables in washrooms.
  - > Public portables washrooms like in Tokyo, in the parks or even on the streets.
  - > Accessible gender-neutral washrooms.
  - > Doors too heavy, sinks, dryers, counters, dispensers in washrooms are too high
- **Sidewalks**
  - > In terms of mobility and sidewalks, there's no consistency of the sidewalks across the city. How does the "City assess and review what needs to be done?
  - > Sidewalks are in need of repair – people are not going out in their wheelchair because it is physically hard on their body and it damages their expensive mobility devices.

- > Clean the sidewalks during the winter.
- > Better construction signage to warn people of sidewalk closures ahead.
- > Flatten, repair buckled sidewalks immediately.

- **Restaurants/businesses are not accessible for so many reasons:**
  - > The acoustics are so bad.
  - > Need menus with pictures, large print, braille options.
  - > High counters
- • **Accessible Path of Travel**
  - > Accessible pathways allow every one the opportunity to visit friends and neighbours and develop social connections and not live in isolation.
  - > If you can't get into a building, you can't belong.
  - > Access to businesses - not only getting into the front door but also navigating the narrow aisles throughout the stores. Quite often people can't navigate once they get into the businesses.
  - > Not enough automatic door openers; they also need to be slower.
- **Crosswalks/Intersections**
  - > Lights are not long enough– put in a secondary button to extend the length of lights at the intersections.
  - > Consider vibration alarm systems at crosswalks; helpful for people who are blind or visually impaired.
- **Curb-Cuts**
  - > Not enough curb cuts and existing curb cuts are not being repaired.
  - > Curb cuts often do not align with curb cuts on the opposite side of the street and puts members of the public in increased danger.
  - > Paint the edges of curb cuts so low vision people can see them.



Picture Description: There are nine people in this picture. There is one person using a wheelchair and being pushed by another person; and there is another person in a wheelchair as well. There are a couple of people using canes, one person pushing a baby stroller, and one person with a prosthetic lower limb. There is another person sitting down carrying a sign saying "need help". This picture shows the diversity of the people and what we bring to the community.

  - > Remove curb bulges (curb bulges are a traffic calming measure which narrow curbs at street intersections. Streets that are 10 metres wide typically have two bulges installed, one on each side of the street).
- **Signage:**
  - > It is important for everyone but particularly for people with profound hearing loss.
  - > Signs need to be lowered; easier for people who have a visual impairment and should be yellow and black.
  - > Clearly marked and legible street names.

TRANSPORTATION PROGRAMS, SERVICES AND POLICIES

Programs, services, and policies are in place, which prevent and remove barriers to accessing affordable, suitable and adequate private and public transportation.

- A more friendly and inclusive shuttle service around the City to get people from place to place – access to parks, green spaces, grocery shopping, medical facilities etc.
- Offer reliable public transportation that links all districts, allows for people with disabilities to move around how they need to, whether walking or wheelchairs, with good street lighting and paving on sidewalks.
- Develop applications where people can use audio and figure out the best routes to travel.
- Affordable and accessible transit. Enforceable rules against discrimination when accessing transportation which includes missing facilities, and refusal of services.
- All transportation companies need to provide accessible service (False Creek Ferries, Harbour Air).
- **HandyDart:**
  - > HandyDart restricts the time of day to travel the Lower Mainland thus impedes the programs and public events persons with disabilities can partake in. For example, wait times, hours of operation, booking system, pick-up zones, etc.
  - > Too much pre and post waiting times for HandyDart
  - > The training do not meet needs of persons with disabilities
  - > HandyDart should not have borders between municipalities
- **SkyTrain:**
  - > Not enough accessible and working elevators and escalators at SkyTrain stations.
  - > A SkyTrain without noise – other countries have high-tech bullet trains that are quiet.

- > More priority seating for seniors and people with disabilities.
- > There needs to be a visual accompaniment to the stops on buses and SkyTrains.
- > Trains shutting down early on weekends is problematic

- **Buses:**
  - > Bus stops are being removed when they should be increased.
  - > Bus driver attitudes and lack of understanding about needs of persons with disabilities.
  - > Better signage and lighting in the bus loops.
  - > There should be signage on all sides and angles of the bus.
  - > Buses are only letting one wheelchair person on buses when there is room for two; supposedly due to social distancing.
  - > Buses are poorly designed in that the seats supposedly allocated for seniors are very difficult to access and stand up from.
  - > Free bus passes for persons with disabilities would be helpful. Not everyone who is disabled gets a bus pass.
  - > Seniors and persons with disabilities need more time to board and get off the trains and buses.
  - > Require more buses that go to parks and public spaces.
  - > Re-routing buses can be a huge barrier for those with disabilities.
- **Taxis:**
  - > Not enough accessible taxis.
  - > Is there anything the City can do to regulate the number of available cabs?
  - > Cabs do not want to accommodate us; they don't want to pick us up.
  - > Uber adds a whole other layer to the transportation issue. Does anybody know how Uber is working or not for persons with disabilities?
  - > There is nothing stopping the City, which has other regulatory powers to require more taxis.
  - > Change the locations of taxi pick-up zones.
- **Parking:**
  - > Not enough accessible parking spaces for vehicles and mobility aid/devices
  - > For people with a hearing impairment, consider installing subtitles on the audible parking metres as many people cannot hear the park by phone instructions.
  - > Free parking for persons who have a disability.
  - > Wider parking spots for vans with side entry or those in wheelchairs.

- **Bicycles:**
  - > For Deafblind persons, there needs to be rules or policies for bike users and it needs to be enforced.
  - > The City has made so many concessions for bikes but it takes away from the freedoms of others.
  - > Put up cautionary signs for cyclists to yield to wheelchairs and people on mobility devices.
  - > Bike lanes on should have more stop signs.
  - > Consider licensing for bikes. Safety measures for pedestrians should come first.
  - > No accessible options for City of Vancouver's Mobi bike share program (i.e. tricycles).
  - > Widen the bike lanes.

> There should be a range of housing options from supported housing to regular market rentals or to purchase that have basic accessibility built-in.
>
> *- Survey Participant*

HOUSING PROGRAMS, POLICIES AND SERVICES

Housing programs, services and policies are in place, which prevent and remove barriers to accessing affordable, suitable and adequate housing

- Not enough affordable, accessible housing especially for people in a wheelchair.
- Single Room Occupancy (SRO) units are not accessible; people with mobility issues are put in places with no elevator.
- Apartments are so small now that they don't consider disabilities.
- People who are living in housing units supported by the City that do not have sufficient community services built in to those housing units.
- The City relies on BC Housing's definition for accessible housing is 5%. And CMHC accessible housing is 10%. But the City goes for the lowest denominator in its housing strategy.
- People are paying more than 50% of their income on housing. Housing that costs should be less than 30+% of income.
- Housing for seniors requires a much higher level of accessible units which then means that the non-profits and co ops who are delivering those units need to have sufficient number of accessible units as well as the financial burden of increasing unit sizes as well.
- People who are homeless are not able to participate well in the City; seniors are the highest roaming demographic of people moving in shelters.
- New residences being built all over Vancouver, but those are for the wealthy. Doesn't Vancouver have a policy to have a percentage of people with disabilities or homeless people to live in these places as well?

- People should be able to age in place and stay in their own home instead of having to move into assisted living or long-term care.
- Would like to see the City to consider ways for property tax easements that would encourage people who are making legal income suites accessible. Many people who can't get low-income housing would happily live in a legal basement suite if it was accessible.

> Information needs to be accessible. Disabled folks spend their whole lives advocating for things and searching for things – trying to find out information and it is so exhausting.

- Financial support in retrofitting homes when/if an individual's status of being able-bodied changes.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

Communication and information provided is accessible to all and demonstrates, exemplifies and embodies our municipal diversity and inclusion values.

- Lack of accessible communication strategies throughout the City including but not limited to wayfinding and building layouts.
- The pandemic has really highlighted the technological divide and the lack of access to information.
- People are lacking technology and the skills to use the technology:
  - > Provide a program that teaches basic computer skills.
  - > Many people may not have internet or a computer or never grew up with technology or lose capacity or do not have the financial means to access technology.
  - > So many people with a disability and seniors don't have access to computers or the internet. How do you access service when everything is on-line?
  - > We need universal public broadband.
- Accessibility is the implementation and design of both physical infrastructure and communication that accommodate persons with disabilities:
  - > Online forms are not accessible to people who are blind or visually impaired. Only consider people with eyesight.



Picture Description: There is a person who uses a wheelchair getting into an accessible taxi cab. This person is using the ramp to get into the cab. The cab is a mini-van with the wheelchair symbol on its window

  - > The use of figurative language without explanation.
  - > Need for standardized communications for people who are blind, constructed to be used with text to speech software.
  - > Government funded translation and interpretation services, including ASL
  - > Lack of: multi-lingual services and translation/interpretation that is free; audio descriptions.
  - > Be knowledgeable about needs of the deaf and blind community and the specialized communication methods (tactile environments, use of interveners, etc.).
- **City Website:**
  - > There is not a webpage or section of the site which is specifically focused on pertinent information for people with disabilities and the senior's page has not been updated for some time.
  - > 3-1-1 and 2-1-1 should be advertised more prominently to ensure people are aware of them as ways to get more information and speak to someone directly.
  - > Establish a group of people with adapted needs who can act as consultants for the website and look at proposed changes.
- Overall, there needs to be improvements in the use of assistive technology.
- Language needs to be at a level where we all understand – plain language.
- How can you participate or volunteer your time if you don't have access to the information or the skills to able to access that information?
- Make sure that information is readily available in multiple forms and is plain language.
- Accessing information through an easy telephone line and being able to talk to a real person.
- Have audio description available at significant cultural events such as parades and visual displays help bring out those with sight loss
- Have sign language interpreters at meetings, events and so forth.
- Have accessibility features within social media campaigns and social media platforms.
- Websites with software for people with vision/hearing impairments.
- The City could take advantage of TV channels that have side panels on their screens and provide information about services and programs.
- Language interpreters are needed; there are so many diverse cultures in Vancouver and many do not speak English.

- The use of masks for Deafblind persons is very challenging:
  - > Transparent masks would be helpful.
  - > Have a whiteboard available so things can be written down.
- If working with people who are Deafblind - black or yellow text is easier to see.
- Increased use of an FM (frequency modulation) system which is a wireless device that helps people hear better in noisy situations.
- Create a symbol (maybe an ear) that identifies establishments that provide accessible communication; similar to the wheelchair sign.
- Theatres have those closed captioning units that you can put into the cup holder; the City could do this at City sponsored events.
- Radio announcements and larger print signs for those with a visual impairment.
- The municipal government should be covering the cost of interpreters for people accessing services at City Hall.
- Phone systems such as video relay services are very frustrating and hard to navigate.

EMPLOYMENT

Support the recruitment, accommodation, retention and promotion of employees with disabilities. Create a work environment that is accessible, diverse and inclusive.

- Equal access to employment with the City of Vancouver.
- Volunteerism is a stepping stone to employment; increase opportunities for persons with disabilities to volunteer.
- Hire people with disabilities in important roles. People with disabilities should be an integral part of the staff developing and implementing an accessibility plan.
- The City should have explicit affirmative action programs that hire people with a wide range of disabilities.
- Need for living wage, to reduce experiences with poverty and housing insecurity.
- Strengths based approach to employment: “the ability to navigate services, demonstrate knowledge, and perform work in a manner that best reflects, and is responsive to, the individuals’ strengths and needs”.
- Employers don’t understand and do not make the effort to create an accessible work environment:
  - > Staff don’t always for comfortable or safe sharing information about their disability.

> "Something that's in place in the beginning of a project or program and embedded from the very beginning rather than it's an afterthought. It becomes accommodation and that's not accessibility."
>
> *- Dialogue Participant*

  - > Managers don't understand that I can do the work but it may take me longer. My brain is wired differently.
- Need education, working experience and volunteerism to obtain employment.
- In general, there should be some kind of strategy or program that would allow people with disabilities and struggling looking for work to guide a career pathway in figuring out where we want to go in life. In general, there should be some kind of strategy or program that would allow people with disabilities and struggling looking for work to guide a career pathway in figuring out where we want to go in life.
- The rate of unemployment for people with disabilities is staggeringly high.
- Requiring a driver's license for employment is a barrier.
- What is the City doing to remove barriers so people with diverse abilities can apply for and pursue employment with the City and beyond?
  - > Make the application and interview process more accessible.
  - > How are staff being retained?
  - > Are they able to progress in their career?
  - > Employee accommodation process is unclear. What does reasonable accommodation look like? Has the City considered establishing an accommodation office?
  - > Have more part-time positions.
  - > Do a comprehensive audit.
  - > Work with unions to remove barriers and promote customized and supported employment. Unions should be more supportive and encouraging employers to hire people with disabilities and encourage more flexibility. For example, 4 hour shifts can be a barrier to employment for many.
- Has the City considered providing work experience opportunities to students who have a disability? We would welcome the opportunity to discuss work experience programs and how the City could participate. There are job coaches who support the students on site.
- What is the City doing to learn from other inclusive employers to ensure all people have equal opportunity? Is the City of Vancouver a member of the President's Club (a network of 25 change-driven BC business leaders who are champions for more accessible, inclusive workplaces)?
- Educate staff so they understand the different types of disabilities and the challenges people face

GOVERNANCE AND SERVICES

Provide equitable access to municipal programs and services and increased engagement and participation opportunities in local government business and public life and public decision making.

Citizen Engagement

- Nothing about us without us.
- There is a lot of skepticism within the disability community as to whether the City really does listen.
- Needs to be an openness and willingness; the people who make decisions need to be open-minded and flexible and really hear what people need.
- Citizen engagement has to be accessible which means accommodating the various abilities and diverse needs.
- Ongoing partnerships with people who have lived experience so the City can learn from and promote the leadership and voice of people with disabilities.
- The City needs to create more opportunities for people's voice to be heard right from the beginning.
  - > Take into account voices of people who are usually overlooked.
  - > If you plan for the margins, you have to talk to them. Marginalized voices within marginalized communities need to be represented.
  - > Create more ways to have our voices heard at City Council. It is an intimidating process.
  - > Involving us results in better decision, plans and projects and maximizes the benefits.
  - > There must be a collaborative and inclusive approach to decision-making that makes the participation meaningful.
  - > Social networks and engagement in civic and community life is better for health and health outcomes.
- Speaking a language so everyone understands what is being said, that the information we give is accurate and travels up the chain without being lost in translation and keeping us informed about what is going on.



Picture Description: Eight people are together in a tight group and it seems like they are having a good time together as they are all smiling. This group represents people with disabilities, along with people from a diverse ethnic backgrounds and culture. Two people, one using a wheelchair and one wearing a prosthetic, are giving each other a high five to each other.

- Provide a safe space where people can be open with their opinion and not be afraid of being bullied.
- Establish community accessibility consultation groups which businesses must consult with during planning phase to give recommendations for universal design.

CAPACITY AND COLLABORATION

Increase corporate capacity to lead, model and advocate for accessibility change-making within the City, deliver professional services and develop collaborative, positive attitudes in partnership with our communities.

Programs and Services:

- Make sure services and resources are presented in a way that is available to everyone; that language is inclusive and people are not being “othered”.
- Neighbourhood houses and community centres are our “living rooms” in the communities, so supporting these can help to make our city more accessible.
- The City could look for ways to better provide equitable funding for organizations.
- Community centres should have programs for persons with disabilities just as they do for seniors or families.
- Encourage community centres to hold a lot more events for people with disabilities to increase the social life for youths
- Programs should have additional support people available to persons with disabilities so they can participate.
- Having to fill out forms and having to prove your disability to achieve income assistance or access to a program or service are barriers.
- There is on-line ticketing for many of the Park Board facilities and programs. This makes it very difficult for people who are not confident using website. There should be in-person and over the phone ticket purchasing options as well.
- How can we integrate more supports for people who are low income to be able to access all the different services or be able to find ways to determine what is available to them?
    - > It would be great to have a centralized hub where people can go to find out more about what services is available to them, and which services are accessible, in particular.
    - > People don’t even know what’s in the City or what could help them to obtain better housing or better technology or better funding or home support.
    - > People don’t even know that there is such a thing as beach wheelchairs.

- Invest in community-based services including:
  - > Restorative programs.
  - > Mentorship programs.
  - > Substance use.
  - > Create more opportunities for inter-generational interaction such as co-locating eldercare and childcare facilities.
  - > Have a service that helps people get their garbage to the curb which is not something every disabled person can do.

> The City should not be waiting for the province or the federal government to tell them how to develop good accessibility plans. The City should be the benchmark for the rest of the country.
>
> *- Dialogue Participant*

- Arts and culture – more accessibility needed.
  - > Is there any hearing assist capacity within civic theatres?
  - > More accessible seating at various venues, sports, and arts and culture.
- Expand criteria for the leisure access passes as Nanaimo and Surrey are doing so that people can self-identify as having a disability and it isn't being attached to low-income as identified by people with disabilities.
- Creating sports readily accessible for us with disabilities. Being able to play basketball with no kind of limitations.
- Public events:
  - > Should be completing an accessibility audit and posting it on a website for public reference.
  - > Is the City even using the Creating Accessible Events document that is on the City website?
  - > Have designated places at events where there is a big television that you can see and provide captioning.
  - > Provide staff/ volunteers available to assist people with disabilities as needed (not everyone has access to a care aid).

Customer Service:

- First point of contact is key to one's experience and can determine whether or not they come back.
- Sometimes it is like winning a lottery ticket when you need to talk to someone about your accessibility needs. You just hope you get that one person who is flexible or understanding enough to understand what it is that you need instead of following the policy manual.
- There should be an option to make an appointment rather than standing in line. For those who suffer with physical or chronic fatigue, waiting in line is not feasible.

- Make sure that services have the option of using an FM (frequency modulations) sound system or hearing loop system. For community centers and programming, staff need to understand there is a duty to accommodate disabled people. The rules and regulations need to be flexible so persons with a disability can fit in.
- There needs to be a change in culture so that as things are designed by the City of Vancouver, accessibility is at the forefront.

> An accessibility strategy is only as useful as the tools it builds in to enforce and ensure accountability. How will the City build in accountability to the plan?
>
> *- Survey Participant*

- Better integration and stronger collaboration between the City and organizations - a systemic approach to the issues related to accessibility.
  - > Have more strategic planning activities particularly with the professional health services such as Vancouver Coastal Health. The integration of health and well- being for people with disabilities would be helpful.
- Right now the City is working on the accessibility strategy but how much outreach to other organizations has been done? Is VCH part of that process?
  - > The City should be talking to other organizations (e.g. VCH) about the strategy and then looking at ways they could partner together.
  - > More collective collaboration amongst organizations, especially people with disabilities who should be part of the planning.
- The City could do more in terms of recognizing those who are doing an exemplary job for being accessible and inclusive and showcase those initiatives.
- The City should not be passing the buck; take responsibility for accessibility and show leadership.
- There needs to be a way to measure and actually enforce everything that you outline within the Accessibility Strategy, otherwise most people won't be aware of it and follow through.
- City should do a mapping process that identifies businesses that are accessible.
- What is stopping this City from creating the Office of an Accessibility Advocate?
- There needs to be a City planner position focussed on seniors and a Seniors Action Plan.
- Do more research that looks at the differences about ageing sub-populations to understand what matters in enabling people to age in a better way.
- There is very little data on persons with disabilities. We need data.
- The Mayor should go to UBCM, where all of the provincial politicians get together with municipal politicians and have a sincere conversation with the ministers and the premier about addressing some of the issues that result from poverty that municipalities are left trying to clean up.

- Provide more funding for the organizations that deliver services to persons with disabilities, seniors and immigrant services.
- There should be a challenge to the City and developers to set aside a day where they spend the day in a manual wheelchair and try to do their jobs.
- Ask questions about inclusion and accessibility whenever the City grants funds for events, activities or programs.
- The City has a role in reducing stigma and discrimination through public education, staff training and awareness raising:
  - > Consider a Public Awareness Campaign to help people understand the challenges that persons with disabilities face.
  - > Think about people with ALL disabilities, not just physical or mental.
  - > Educate community and the City about true accessibility especially around captioning, interpreting and interveners.
  - > Put some artwork on the street, reminding others that there are vulnerable people living in the community.
  - > Partner with the self-advocacy community to develop and lead sensitivity and awareness training about disabilities to City staff.
  - > Training for staff about understanding the needs of persons with disabilities and treating people with dignity and respect.
  - > Training staff is so important because if you have never been exposed to a disability, don't know how to behave around someone who may experience challenges accessing the service.

There were new themes that came up in answers to the question about what gets in your way to contributing or participating in the City, and provide some recommendations for the City to do to improve accessibility. Below is the list of responses along with the new themes in blue.

Income/Financial

- High percentage of persons with disability living in poverty.
- When you are poor, you have no choices.
- Living in Vancouver is just too expensive.



Picture Description: A person wearing a headset and sittings in front of a laptop. It shows the person is connecting with people as there are three conversation bubbles representing a dialogue which is happening over the phone or the computer.

- Accessing food and somewhere to live uses up all ones money and are unable to participate in community life.
- Expensive technology is a barrier for Deafblind people.
- If you can privately pay for your access, the City is accessible to you. This City needs to be made accessible for everyone.
- Not only have to pay for the program but also pay for a 1:1 worker to accompany
- Don't want to have to put our adult children in homes out in the Fraser Valley as a result of high costs in Vancouver.
- It's difficult enough to live in Vancouver and support an adult who can't work - there used to be grants for property taxes. It's now next to impossible to receive those – such a quick and easy solution.
- Free recreation passes and reduced rates for accessing programs.
- People with disabilities get $375/month for shelter costs – many people are advocating with provincial government regarding increasing disability rates
- Do anything that promotes free and affordable.
- Transportation fees to get to health services – many people can't afford to get to appointments.
- There is a correlation between economics, disability and food security.
- There should be free parking everywhere for persons with disabilities.

> "It's a pain because like people just don't see us with disabilities – I feel like it's effected – like sometimes people look at us but don't give you consideration like let's hire you, or let's take you on board or something."
>
> *- Dialogue Participant*

Racialization/Discrimination

- During the pandemic, there is so much racialization has happened.
- People are discriminated against based on race, homelessness, substance use, mental health and so forth – discrimination and racism is a huge barrier to accessibility and inclusion.
- Some families avoid certain community spaces and events because of the racism and discrimination they experience.
- We came from our country to Canada and we had understood it was a peaceful country. But, somehow we are facing things that make us feel scared and unsafe.

Intersectionality

- People have intersecting identities and this has to be taken into consideration. There are multiple things that impact people including geographical accessibility, language, age-related issues,

racism, sexism, language, etc.

- We all have different experiences. It reflects our many identities. Women have different experiences than men as do non-binary people and seniors or people facing Anti-Asian racism.
- The intersection of identities — gender, age, racial, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion — or "intersectionality" creates complications for people with disabilities when seeking full inclusion. These layers do not exist separately from each other but intersect to form a person's identity, and can magnify the discrimination and marginalisation they might experience.
- Understanding that in addition to having a disability, a person has other identities such as gender, age, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and religion that interact with each other and can magnify the discrimination and marginalisation they might

Reduce Stigma and Ableism through Awareness/Education/Training

- How do we shift the perceptions of what it means to have a disability?
- We need Vancouver to change to see disabled people the same as other people.
- Understanding ableism before addressing accessibility – ableism is at the root of the problem.
- Attitudinal barriers – that somehow because a person has a disability, they have low IQ or are not capable.
- We are missing out on the "wonderfulness" of people who do things differently.
- Don't patronize me; it makes it harder for me to be seen as an equal.
- It is not part of our culture to work with people's disabilities and find a way for them to contribute meaningfully and have that sense of normalcy.
- There is an overall lack of empathy and lack of understanding.
- It's about education and attitude towards change and willingness towards change.
    - > Ongoing education is important so there can be a better understanding of how ableism and other isms are interacting to create barriers
    - > Education about the different types of disabilities (sensory, dementia, brain injury, etc.) at al levels of community and municipalities.
    - > More understanding about dementia; sometimes it is an invisible disability and sometimes people may present as able-bodied.
    - > Needs to be some myth-busting and focussing on the incredible skills, talents and capabilities of person with disabilities.
    - > Need to educate the rest of the populations – everyone is unique.

> Educating people about substance use and safe supplies.

> People need to learn from people with diverse abilities.

> BC is not very tuned into “sensory” disabilities (noise and visual). Seems to be more awareness in other provinces. Things such as lighting in stores, high pitch sounds on the SkyTrain, allergies, memory loss, – are all examples.

> Disability is not always physical, many people experience trauma before coming to Canada.

> The strong preference toward neurotypicality and the lack of meaningful education on neurodivergency. (Neurodivergence is the term for when someone’s brain processes, learns, and/or behaves differently from what is considered “typical.”)

> So much has to do with educating Vancouverites. There is an accessible parking spot near our home and a neighbour said “not everybody is as lucky as you to have a parking spot like that.” It is not about the parking space; it is about seeing our needs for what they are.”

> Start educating in the school system.

Rights/Advocacy

- Nobody is citing the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Canada ratified it which means they have to do something about it. Seems to be no connecting to make this happen.
- Knowing people’s rights will be a conduit to reducing the need for self-advocacy.
- Build a culture where individuals and families don’t always have to be the ones advocating for themselves.

Health Care

- Hard to get services (Life labs, dentist, doctors). They don’t always understand the needs and behaviours.
- Access to emergency or medical services can be challenging as it can be hard to advocate for yourself if you are very sick.
- Not enough mental health supports of young people and adults.
- Put more money into seniors and home care so the elderly can stay in their own homes.
- So difficult to find personal care attendants.
- Use of whiteboard or some sort of captioning system that can be made mandatory all over the hospital for communication accessibility.
- The design of new health care facilities, the cost of parking and access to safe parking need to be given serious consideration.

Social Isolation/ Inclusion

- There is not yet a really strong strategy for identifying people that are socially isolated and knowing where they are or inviting them to participate or being included.
- If we want to include people, we have to identify them and we have to reach out to them.
- We could be using various vehicles, the police incidents, fire incidents, opportunities of where there's some way of flagging or becoming aware of adults at risk of loneliness or isolation.
- People with disabilities experience social isolation and the pandemic has exacerbated, demonstrated that issue.
- Making sure people don't feel like they are "being othered."
- Being a caregiver – often unable to find someone to relieve.
- Isolation and stigma: seniors are less likely to go out and if there is a disability, even more so.

Safety and Security

- Being able to get to places in my wheelchair; sidewalks are unsafe for people with canes or other mobility devices.
- Ability to ride safely and without fear.
- Increase transit security especially at night.
- Able to enter and use public facilities safely and without painful manoeuvering.
- Lack of safe spaces to use drugs.

Access to Education

- Universities need to be accessible.
- Schools are not always accessible.
- I am disabled and I want to go to school but I cannot afford it and have nobody to help with my children.

G. HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

Our community engagement process gave space for people with disabilities to share their stories, ideas, and feedback for making the Accessibility Strategy.

How We Collected and Analyzed the Information:

- The questions were made with the Accessibility Task Force and staff from the Social Policy Research and Data Team.

- Feedback was given by City staff and/or organization representative for the purposes of improving sessions.
- Each of the Dialogue Sessions were recorded with verbal consent.
- There was a note-taker for each session.
- Closed Captioning transcripts were reviewed and summarized.
- Summary reports from each Dialogue Session were given to participants to check if everything was right.
- The Shape Your City survey results were reviewed and combined with answers from the Dialogue Sessions

Successes of the Community Engagement

- ASL and Closed Captioning were welcomed.
- Participants liked that the City made this opportunity to be heard.
- Generally, sessions were well organized and participants felt that they had been provided with enough information.
- Questions seemed to work very well; many people liked that they were open-ended questions and could answer in their own words.
- All participants enjoyed having the space to provide their feedback and suggestions.
- Many of the participants liked having the background information emailed to them ahead of time.

Challenges of the Community Engagement

- People didn't find Webex to be user friendly.
- The process for distributing honorariums was cumbersome and could be improved.
- More time should be given to deal with technology issues.
- Some community members may have been missed that did not have access to a technical device
- Some community members may have not participated because of their technical skills or because 2 hours is too long.
- The survey did not have enough room for long answers.
- Some people felt that the survey should have been only completed by persons with disabilities and not service providers or caregivers.
- The majority of the community engagement happened over summer which may have made it hard for some people to take part.

H. NEXT STEPS

This report is a summary of the responses from what was heard through the Dialogue Sessions and the Shape Your City Survey.

A more detailed overview of what we heard is being made. It will include information from more sources such as:

- The Internal Staff Working Group
- Reports from Persons with Disabilities Advisory Committee
- Reports from Seniors Advisory Committee
- Other community engagement data

The feedback in this summary will guide the writing of the draft Accessibility Strategy.

More community engagement activities will take place later in 2022 to make sure that the draft Accessibility Strategy creates a City where all people feel valued, respected, and openly welcomed.