

Access for People with Disabilities



Mount Pleasant

City of Vancouver
Community
planning program

City Role

Vancouver is considered to be one of the most accessible cities in the world. Whether using wheelchairs, white canes or hearing aids, Vancouver is leading the way to make the city a more liveable place for people with disabilities through its progressive transportation systems, innovative housing, and recreational opportunities.

The City, along with other levels of government and agencies is actively involved improving access for persons with disabilities, including mobility, visual, or hearing impairment.

Persons with Disabilities Advisory Committee

The objective of this Advisory Committee is to make the city more liveable for disabled residents through the removal of physical and social barriers that impede their full participation in city life.

They provide advice to City Council and staff on matters which affect people with disabilities and monitor City programs to ensure the needs of persons with disabilities are considered.

Public Streets and Sidewalks

Making streets accessible, comfortable and safe is crucial to developing a liveable city where the street becomes a place of interest and focus for the community. The following are some features that are designed to specifically enhance

accessibility to public space.

Curb Ramps at Intersections

Over 65% of curbed street corners in the city have ramps. In the downtown core, this number rises to 90%. The City's goal is to provide curb ramps at all street corners over the next 50 years. Individuals and groups can bring priority locations to the attention of City engineers by phoning 604-871-6131.

Audible Traffic Signals

As of March, 2009, we have 779 traffic signals of which 370 are audible, 317 pedestrian signals and 298 have cyclist push buttons.

The annual budget for installing audible signals is \$50,000, enough to retrofit 5 to 10 intersections per year, depending on the type of signal. The majority of audible installations are done in response to requests from residents. The annual budget for installing cyclist push button signals is \$170,000, enough for 20 intersections per year. All new signal installations include a cyclist push button.

Each request for audible signals is reviewed with the Canadian National Institute of the Blind (CNIB). Consideration is given to the type of nearby pedestrian traffic generators, such as the CNIB office, hospitals, clinics, schools that offer classes to visually impaired students, major transit transfer stops, and areas with a high number of seniors.

In 1990 it became policy that all new pedestrian-activated traffic signals be installed with an audible feature. Audible signals are also in place at intersections where traffic signals are vehicle-activated.

New state-of-the-art audible touch-oriented signal buttons will be installed at some crossings. This unit emits a regular audible beep that helps hearing-impaired individuals locate the button. A vibrating arrow indicates to people with hearing impairments when it is safe to cross in a given direction.

Crossing Times at Signalized Intersections

Crossing times are set to meet the needs of a wide range of pedestrians, including children and seniors. Requests for increased crossing times, if approved, effect the duration that the "flashing hand" is active. Requests for longer crossing times can be made by calling Engineering staff at 604-873-7182.

Vancouver Building By-law

Accessibility for persons with disabilities is one of the by-law's five key objectives. The City's Building By-law, for large-scale residential, commercial, and institutional buildings, requires many provisions to accommodate persons with disabilities, including:

- access ramps;
- adequate hallway widths;
- refuge areas for emergencies; and
- accessible bathrooms.

The By-law requires accessibility measures be provided if significant renovations or change of uses occur within an existing building. The City regulates the construction of buildings including additions or alterations, and an evaluation of buildings undergoing a change of major occupancy and upgrading of an unacceptable hazard. For information call 604-873-7611.

Vancouver Parking By-law
In 2001 new regulations governing disability parking in Vancouver were approved by City Council. The changes included:

- more disabled parking spaces for facilities such as nursing homes, churches, medical offices, retail stores, and apartments
- larger disability parking spaces, to accommodate more varied vehicles
- improved accessibility for new parking facilities, and
- improving requirements for accessibility of ticketing equipment in parking facilities.

Community Centres and Recreation

The Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation develops policies and guidelines to enhance and promote greater access to, and use of, parks, community centres, and other facilities for persons with disabilities. Part of their capital budget each year is allocated to improve accessibility. All centres have accessible washrooms and signed parking and the new Mount Pleasant Community Centre at #1 Kingsway is being constructed to modern accessibility standards.

Many recreation programs have been adapted to enable people with various disabilities to participate. Accessible equipment such as aquatic wheelchairs and pool lifts, ice sledges and golf express carts are available at Park Board facilities. In Stanley Park the summer Shuttle Bus is accessible and stops at 14 locations. The Stanley Park Train, Beaver Lake Trail, and the horse-drawn tours are

also wheelchair accessible. For a complete list of adapted programs contact the Park Board at 604-257-8400 or visit <http://vancouver.ca/parks/rec/access/index.htm>.

Public Libraries

Vancouver Public Library (VPL) adopted the accessibility policy in 1986 to assist disabled patrons to read, consult reference books and write, without being segregated from other patrons.

Community Service Grants

The Social Policy Department offers community services grants to Vancouver-based non-profit organizations to help ensure equitable access to appropriate services. For more information call 604-873-7487.

Provincial Programs and Special Events

The 2010 Winter Games - Inner-City Inclusive Commitment Statement

During the implementation phase of the 2010 Olympics, steps will be taken to meet the needs of different groups, such as aboriginal people, women, youth, people with disabilities, people of colour, immigrants, and other groups.

The Vancouver 2010 Bid

Corporation and its Member Partners have adopted the following goals and objectives to address the interests of those living in Vancouver's inner-city neighbourhoods, including Mount Pleasant:

- a) Develop barrier free venues for people with disabilities
- b) Ensure reasonable accessibility for people with disabilities.

Measuring Up Accessibility and Inclusion Fund

2010 Legacies Now has received a \$2-million grant from the Province of BC to establish this fund. The fund will support community projects aiming to improve how people with disabilities can actively

participate in, and contribute to, their communities.

Other Services

The Social Planning and Research Council of British Columbia

(SPARC BC) is located at 4445 Norfolk Street, in Burnaby. SPARC BC is a non-partisan, independent charitable organization that conducts public education and research on key social issues. They manage the Parking Permit Program for People with Disabilities and run a social research consultancy.

SPARC's main focus is accessibility, community development, income security, and the parking permit program for people with disabilities. Addressing these issues helps to reduce hazards, create safety, and increase access for the diverse needs of people with disabilities in British Columbia. For more information call 604-718-7733.

The BC Coalition of People with Disabilities

is located at 456 W. Broadway, and is a provincial, cross-disability advocacy organization. The goal is to raise public and political awareness of disability issues, promote independence, and to facilitate full participation of people with disabilities in all aspects of society. For more information call 604-875-0188.

Transit and Taxi Service

Many new Translink buses are equipped with wheel-chair ramps. Translink also runs an on-call wheelchair-accessible mini-van service (the Handy-Dart). Several taxi companies offer specially designed taxis to accommodate wheelchairs. For more information on Handy-Dart Services call 604-430-2692.

Sources

City of Vancouver
SPARC BC
BC Translink