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**To:** "Direct to Mayor and Council - DL"  
**CC:** "City Manager's Correspondence Group - DL"  
"Singh, Sandra" <Sandra.Singh@vancouver.ca>  
**Date:** 4/13/2021 6:11:23 PM  
**Subject:** Update: Accessibility Strategy, Phase I Development - RTS 12581  
**Attachments:** ACCS - GM - Memo (Mayor & Council) Update on the Accessibility Strategy (2021-04-13).pdf

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Dear Mayor and Council,

The attached memo from Sandra Singh provides information on the progress of Phase 1 of the Accessibility Strategy in response to the Council request for an update on the motion passed on September 18th, 2018 (RTS 12581) regarding the development of a Strategy. The memo will update Council on:

- ⦿ Work to date to develop Accessibility Strategy, Phase I;
- ⦿ Descriptions of the components of Phase I;
- ⦿ Discussion of the engagement with the Accessibility Taskforce who staff meet with regularly; and
- ⦿ Timeline for delivery.

Should you have any questions, please contact Sandra Singh, General Manager, Arts, Culture and Community Services at [Sandra.Singh@vancouver.ca](mailto:Sandra.Singh@vancouver.ca) and she will ensure they are responded to through the weekly Council questions process.

Best,  
Paul

**Paul Mochrie** (he/him)  
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The City of Vancouver acknowledges that it is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the xʷməθŋəʔəm (Musqueam), lúwáʔmesh (Squamish), and səliwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

## MEMORANDUM

April 13, 2021

TO: Mayor & Council

CC: Paul Mochrie, Acting City Manager  
Karen Levitt, Deputy City Manager  
Lynda Graves, Administration Services Manager, City Manager's Office  
Maria Pontikis, Director, Civic Engagement and Communications  
Katrina Leckovic, City Clerk  
Anita Zaenker, Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office  
Neil Monckton, Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office  
Alvin Singh, Communications Director, Mayor's Office  
City Leadership Team  
MaryClare Zak, Managing Director, Social Policy and Projects  
Wilma Clarke, Assistant Director, Social Policy and Projects

FROM: Sandra Singh, General Manager, Arts, Culture and Community Services

SUBJECT: Update on the Accessibility Strategy

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### PURPOSE

This memo provides an update on the ongoing work towards the development of Phase I of a City of Vancouver Accessibility Strategy, as directed by Council.

### BACKGROUND

#### Council Direction and Funding

On April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2018, the City of Vancouver Persons with Disabilities Advisory Committee unanimously passed a motion titled "Accessible City Strategy" and on May 2, 2018, City Council passed a motion on accessibility which included a request for a report back to Council with recommendations for moving forward with an Accessibility Strategy.

On September 7, 2018, a staff report (RTS No. 12581) was presented to Council with the following recommendations:

- i. Development of Phase 1 of an Accessibility Strategy in 2019.
- ii. Convening of an Accessibility Task Force with membership from the Persons with Disabilities Advisory Committee, the Seniors' Advisory Committee, the Mayor's Task

Force on Mental Health, and Addictions People with Lived Experiences Working Group.

On September 18, 2018, Council approved the development of Phase 1 of an Accessibility Strategy and identified a set of high-level deliverables and recommendations for additional phases. These include:

- A clear, comprehensive statement of City principles around accessibility - focused on physical, mental health, cognitive, communication, intellectual, sensory, or age-related impairments - and including clarifying terms such as “Universal Design”, “Accessibility”, and “Disability”;
- Dedicated resource(s) with appropriate expertise to coordinate accessibility work across City departments;
- Identification of internal and external stakeholders and how projects will engage with them (a stakeholder engagement plan);
- Identification of key barriers to accessibility and prioritization of efforts to address accessibility in the city;
- Clarify responsibilities of City departments for addressing accessibility in their roles within the organization;
- Outline accountability of departments for implementation of the Strategy; and
- A scope for the next phases of the Accessibility Strategy, including goals, timelines, and resources.

This scope allows a phased approach to develop an Accessibility Strategy. Other phases will be implemented as directed and resourced by Council.

## **DISCUSSION**

The development of the Accessibility Strategy further reinforces the City’s recognition of the rights, dignity, and independence of people with disabilities, seniors and people with lived experience of mental health and substance use concerns within our community, and strengthens the City’s ability to create a culture of equity and inclusion that values and includes all residents, visitors and employees.

### Strategic Considerations

In 2019, federal legislation (*Accessible Canada Act*) was passed and work began on the BC Accessibility Legislation, which was proposed for Fall 2020. The COVID pandemic delayed the introduction of the BC Accessibility Legislation to the Spring of 2021. It is anticipated that the BC Accessibility Legislation will mandate that municipalities align their own policies and procedures with the Provincial accessibility standards.

The Accessibility Strategy is being developed in tandem with the Equity Framework and the Healthy City Strategy and will also align with the Vancouver Plan and the City of Reconciliation Framework.

Phase 1 of the Accessibility Strategy will outline future phases of this work, which includes recommendations for broader engagement, development of a multi-year action plan and accompanying implementation plan, and the required resources.

### Progress to Date

During the period of October 2018 to January 2019, the Accessibility Task Force was established, a project plan was drafted and preliminary work on the Phase 1 deliverables began. Due to a lack of staffing and management capacity, the report to Council on Phase 1, which was scheduled for mid 2019, did not move forward as planned. An Assistant Director for Social Policy and Projects was hired in October 2019 and part of her work plan includes leading this work. A part-time planner was hired in January 2020 to review and compile all the work done to date, provide support to the Accessibility Task Force and begin the process of mapping out the next steps.

The work on the Strategy moved forward in January 2020, but was then put on hold due to the onset of COVID in order to prioritize the emergency response. During the pandemic, awareness has been raised that COVID did not impact all people equally. Groups of people, including persons with disabilities, seniors and persons with lived experience of mental health and substance use concerns were clearly disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. Staff worked with the sector to determine priorities and potential strategies that would ensure that persons with disabilities were well supported during this time.

Since the beginning of 2020, the Accessibility Task Force has been meeting regularly with staff to guide the development of the Strategy.

Key components of the Accessibility Strategy, Phase I work have been identified as follows:

- Current State Analysis: Identification of key gaps to accessibility in the City and prioritization of the efforts required to address and remedy them:
  - Includes clarification of responsibilities of City departments for addressing accessibility in their roles within the organization.
- Community Profile: to ensure clear understanding of range of considerations.
- Corporate Accessibility Policy:
  - Statement of Commitment
  - Definitions and Principles
  - Proposed Areas of Focus: *Built Environment, Housing, Information and Communication, Employment, Transportation, Governance and Services and Capacity and Collaboration*
  - Accountability, Monitoring and Compliance Framework
- Stakeholder Engagement Plan to guide future engagement with people with disabilities.
- Scoping for future phases:
  - Development of an Implementation Plan, including goals, timelines, and resources

Work has been underway toward the development of these components, including confirming scope and timeline for delivery, updated jurisdictional scan, updated gap analysis, draft definitions and principles, early engagement and outreach to community organizations, and development of an engagement strategy to support finalization of the strategy.

Other civic agencies, including Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation, Vancouver Police Department, and Vancouver Public Library will be engaged in the process with a goal of developing an accessibility strategy that can be endorsed by all civic organizations.

## **TIMELINE AND NEXT STEPS**

Staff are aware that the work on the Accessibility Strategy has been delayed from the original intended timeline, due to both staffing and leadership capacity limitations and then the unexpected onset of COVID-19 in late February / early March of 2020 and the need to redeploy staff effort to the emergency response.

The necessary staff team is now in place and are collectively determined to deliver this important work in 2021, without further delay. Staff will be launching the community engagement in the spring and early summer, with a plan to present the Strategy to Council for consideration in the fall.

Key findings and feedback from the engagement process will also be shared with the Vancouver Plan team.

## **FINAL REMARKS**

Advancing the work on Phase I of the Accessibility Strategy is a high priority for 2021, recognizing the delays to date. That said, a significant amount of work has been accomplished over the past months. Moving forward, the focus will be on internal and external stakeholder engagement to help inform Phase 1 of the strategy which will be brought to Council for endorsement in September 2021.

If Council has any further questions or needs additional information, please feel free to contact Sandra Singh directly at [sandra.singh@vancouver.ca](mailto:sandra.singh@vancouver.ca).



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Arts, Culture, and Community Services

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