

# **What We've Heard Report:**

## **A Collection of Voices Heard from the Disability Community to support the development of the City of Vancouver's Accessibility Strategy**

The City of Vancouver is located on the traditional, unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵw̓x̓ wú7mesh (Squamish) and səliłwətał (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.

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## A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Vancouver is developing an overarching, long-term Accessibility Strategy. Accessibility is fundamental to everyone's quality of life, well-being and engagement in all aspects of society, which includes social, economic, cultural, spiritual and political.

Almost everyone will experience a temporary, periodic, or permanent change in their functioning at some point in their life, and as we age, we may experience increasing difficulties in functioning. Disabilities are a part of the human condition. We also know that individuals have complex identities that influences their perspectives and experiences, which means that barriers to inclusion may be a result of different layers of identities that intersect with one another.

Accessibility refers to the absence of barriers that prevent individuals and/or groups from participating, contributing and benefiting in all aspects of society. Accessibility is fundamental to the quality of life, well-being and engagement in the social, economic, cultural, spiritual and political aspects of society. It is key component of community inclusion and resilience.

Done well, accessibility ensures all individuals can access services, navigate the cities in which they live and work, and feel a sense of belonging when they spend time in public places. There is no "one size fits all" approach to developing an accessible community. Accessibility differs depending on who you ask – the specific experiences, identities and perspectives determines what each person need across the life course and what they care most about as it relates to accessibility.

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 planning requires deep listening to better understand the diverse perspectives of persons with disabilities in their experiences of how they navigate, participate in their community along with the daily challenges and barriers they may face. As part of the process in drafting the City’s first Accessibility Strategy, staff followed the “nothing about us without us” principle, using various forms of engagement with the community to learn from their lived experiences. The goal was to meet people where they are at by using accessible practices to create spaces for safe, open and honest conversations. Spaces were created for people to tell us about their needs, experiences, and what they understand to be some major challenges and areas of opportunity. City staff made an effort to ensure that individuals that may not be normally included in City engagement processes were invited to share their feedback.

The report that follows describes how staff engaged with community and provides an overview of what was heard from the disability community – compiled from a series of in-depth conversations and a survey. Rich, detailed information was received. As a result, there were a number of “over-arching” messages that people felt were important for the City to pay attention to as the strategy is being developed.

## **Overarching Messages from the Community for the City of Vancouver include:**

- 1. Engage with People with Lived Experience Meaningfully** - The strategy will be beneficial to the disability community only when challenges that impact them 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 somehow 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, therefore the strategy needs to benefit all people across the life 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 a 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 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 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

“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*

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** – 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** – expressed appreciation for the City’s work to develop an Accessibility Strategy. While it 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.

The participants’ experiences also emphasized the importance of the strategy in building on the human rights of British Columbians to ensure respect for the inherent dignity of the individual.

While some of what we heard was outside of the City’s scope of responsibility, we include it all in this report because people have complex and intersecting needs that must be understood within the context of their lives, not based on which jurisdiction holds responsibility. The City has an important role to play in bringing these related issues to the attention of other levels of government responsible.

This report is a high level summary and the first step to gaining a fulsome picture of accessibility in the City. A more comprehensive and in-depth analysis of what we heard is underway and will include information from other sources such as reports from City Advisory Committees and conversations with City staff across departments- all of which will guide and

inform the writing of the draft strategy that will be presented to Council in Spring 2022. Finally, a broader community engagement process will then take place on the draft Strategy to ensure it reflects the community's vision for creating a truly accessible City.

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

## **B. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

Thank you to the members of the Accessibility Task Force for their expert guidance and support as we work to develop the City's Accessibility Strategy. They have been engaged in this process every step of the way, asking the hard questions that challenged, shaped and shifted the work on the strategy. They are constantly reminding staff that the views and perspectives of persons with disabilities must be integrated into all City processes. Partnering with the Taskforce creates an important bridge towards building and maintaining relationships of trust between the City and the disability community.

This report would not be possible without the survey respondents and dialogue session participants from across the disability community. We would like to extend our gratitude and appreciation to all of you for sharing your stories with such honesty, integrity and passion.

Thank you to all of the community organizations we have met with and partnered with to support our community engagement process. Your insights, support and guidance greatly influenced how we engaged with the community to ensure the process was meaningful, accessible, safe and inclusive.

In particular, staff would like to acknowledge AMSAA (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, and Wavefront Centre for Communication Accessibility for partnering with us in the design and delivery several of the dialogue sessions.

And thank you to all the ASL interpreters, Close Captioning and language interpreters who provided the necessary supports throughout the dialogue sessions. These supports were essential in assisting individuals to actively participate in the community engagement sessions.

## **C. INTRODUCTION**

The development of the Accessibility Strategy is taking place in phases. Phase I includes the process underway that sets out commitments, key definitions, principles, areas of focus, a monitoring and accountability framework and outlines future phases of this work, including recommendations for broader engagement and the development of a multi-year action plan. The Phase 1 Accessibility Strategy will be presented to Council in Q1, 2022. Phase 2 is envisioned as an implementation phase.

Accessibility is embedded throughout all of our community functions – from street design, to City communications to housing. As a result, an accessibility strategy must be embedded and well connected to the visionary and operational plans of all City departments.

The proposed Accessibility Strategy for the City of Vancouver will seek to:

- Reinforce the City’s recognition of the rights, dignity, and independence of people with disabilities within our communities;
- Reflect the City’s commitment to support the full participation of persons with disabilities by establishing and maintaining inclusive services, programs and infrastructure and by identifying, removing and preventing barriers; and
- Strengthen the City’s ability to foster a culture of equity and inclusion that values and includes all residents, visitors and employees.

The Social Policy and Projects division of the Arts, Culture and Community Services department is leading the work on the Accessibility Strategy. The City Leadership Team provides oversight and guidance. Social Policy will be working closely with the City’s Equity Officer to determine the role of the Equity Office with the implementation and monitoring. Providing support and guidance in the development of the draft strategy is:

- The Accessibility Task Force (ATF) which was established in 2018 by City



Council. Members were drawn from the City’s Persons with Disabilities Advisory Committee and the Seniors’ Advisory Committee. The ATF works in partnership with City Staff and have been meeting regularly since the beginning of 2020.

- The Internal Staff Working Group which has membership across all departments, the Vancouver Police Department, the Vancouver Public Library and Parks, Recreation and Culture.

The Accessibility Strategy is being developed in tandem with the Equity Framework and the Healthy City Strategy and will align with the Vancouver Plan and the City of Reconciliation Framework. The City’s strategy will further align with the Accessible Canada Act passed in 2019 and the Accessible British Columbia Act passed in June 2021.

## **D. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

### **Process of Engaging with the Community**

Because people are the experts of their own lives, it was important that those with lived experiences be invited and have the opportunity to participate in the development of the Accessibility Strategy. The purpose of the community engagement is to hear from and build relationships with those with lived experience of disabilities, their families, caregivers and organizations, so the City can better understand accessibility from a first-hand experience. The diverse voices and perspectives will provide recommendations to the City on how to improve accessibility and inclusion and help to ensure that the strategy is comprehensive and reflective of the community.

The planning for the community engagement required careful thought and awareness to ensure that all community members could participate successfully. There were three types of community engagement methods used: meet and greets with key organizations, targeted community dialogues, and an online survey.

### **Organization Meet and Greet Sessions**

Staff met with 27 organizations representing persons with disabilities during the months of January – April 2021. The meet and greet sessions involved

an exchange of information between City staff and community organizations on the City’s actions to increase accessibility and organizations’ programs and services in support of people with disabilities. The organizations the City met with represented a diversity of disabilities and intersecting identities such as race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation. A list of the organizations is attached in Appendix A.

### **Targeted Community Dialogues**

The community dialogues were structured as “intimate conversations between friends” which covered topics such as the meaning of accessibility, accessibility barriers, and recommendations for the City.

### **Shape Your City Survey**

A Shape Your City survey was developed and made available to people who were not able to attend a dialogue session or who preferred this method of engagement. The survey was also sent to all of the meet and greet organizations to share with their members.

Between the three engagement methods, the table below outlines 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

### **Structure of the Engagement Process**

Three broad, open-ended questions were asked at the targeted community dialogue sessions and in the Shape Your City Survey. The questions were co-designed by the Accessibility Task Force and City staff. Asking open-ended questions was purposeful because it does not place any limits

on what can be said and allowed respondents to convey their ideas and perspectives based on their experience and in their own words.

The three questions were as follows:

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 participate in and contribute to community life in Vancouver?
3. What would make it easier for you or someone you know to participate in and contribute to community life in Vancouver?

There was also an opportunity, both in the dialogue sessions and on the survey, for participants to provide additional comments and suggestions to the City regarding the development of an Accessibility Strategy.

Protocols were developed ensure safety for participants including having sessions hosted and facilitated by an organization where trust relationships have been established and encouraging participants to bring a support person to the session as needed.

### **Structure of the Targeted Community Dialogues**

Due to the pandemic, all of the community dialogues took place on-line, through either Webex or Zoom. There were 15 conversations that took place through the months of April – November 2021. Each conversation was limited to a maximum of 12 people in order to create space for everyone to speak, which allowed for rich and meaningful conversations. Each conversation was approximately 2 hours long.

“It’s important that you consult with other organizations and people with a large variety of disabilities throughout the entire process so as not to miss anything crucial. The main thing is the funding needed to ensure organizations can follow through.”  
- *Survey Participant*

Prior to the dialogue session, background information was provided to the participants including information about the proposed strategy, and an overview of the role of the City to assist people in understanding the types of things that the City has responsibility for and those things that are the responsibility of other levels of government.

It was essential that accessibility be modeled within the community dialogue process. The following features were included to ensure that everyone was able to participate successfully:

- ASL and Close Captioning were provided for all sessions
- Language interpreters were provided based on participant needs (e.g. language interpreters)
- Written materials were written in plain language and shared in advance with participants.
- Meetings were co-hosted community organizations;
- Staff prepared summary reports and distributed them to participants to review and validate that their insights were accurately captured.

Each of the dialogue sessions started 30 minutes earlier to allow for participants to get comfortable with the technology. Following this, the staff welcomed them, acknowledged the land, provided some background of the Accessibility Strategy, outlined some social norms for participation, asked the three questions, and then demonstrated our appreciation for sharing their stories. The facilitator made sure that everyone had the opportunity to participate in the dialogue. It was important to provide the space for everyone to share their stories, opinions and feedback.

Some of the community dialogues were hosted by the organizations and others were hosted by City staff. For the dialogues hosted by organizations, they recruited the participants, provided the facilitator, and organized the honorariums for the participants. With their own facilitator, it made it easier for the participants to participate as they have a relationship with the

facilitator and thus made it easier for them to contribute, rather than talking to City staff.

After each session, a follow up email was sent out to thank people for their participation and provided them with a link to an evaluation for the session.

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

- *Dialogue Participant*

### **Structure of Shape Your City Survey**

The Shape Your Survey is an online City survey. Survey participants were able to provide comments to the City about what to consider when developing an Accessibility Strategy. The same open-ended questions were asked in the survey as in the targeted dialogue sessions. Because of the format of the survey, there was a character limit for the responses but another response box was provided for additional information along with an email address should participants want to provide further comments. The survey was open for a month from July 1 to 31, 2021.

The link to the survey was emailed to people that wanted to attend the community dialogue sessions but couldn't because of the timing, or couldn't make it at the last minute. It was also emailed to all the organizations the Staff met through our "meets and greets" and they were asked to share the survey with all their members living in Vancouver. In addition, the link to the survey was also on the City's website under the people and programs page.

Along with the survey, some background information about the proposed strategy was outlined on the webpage including the key messages, the proposed areas of focus, and an overview of the role of the City to assist people in understanding the types of things that the City has responsibility for and those things that are the responsibility of other levels of government.

### **Who We Heard From**

Participation for the targeted community dialogues and the Shape Your City Survey were open to individuals to self-identify as having a disability. The individuals that participated in the community engagement process fell into

the three categories that are listed below:

- 1. People with lived experience of a disability** - and the multiple identities that intersect or overlap including age, race, ethnicity, sexuality and gender identity.
- 2. Family members and caregivers** - parents, guardians, siblings and support workers.
- 3. Organizations providing services** - staff or board members that work in the field of disability or other organizations delivering services to a range of people that could include persons who identify as having disabilities.

The various perspectives that were represented in the community engagement are outlined below.

### **Types of Disabilities Reported**

- 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

“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*

- Fatigue Syndrome  
Cognitive/ Intellectual/Developmental  
Spinal Cord Injuries / Degenerative Muscle Diseases

## **Participant Profiles**

### 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

## **E. WHAT WE HEARD**

People shared stories about the challenges and barriers that they experienced including physical, social, environmental, attitudinal, financial and communication and information-related.

### **Community Responses according to Existing Themes and Emerging Themes**

Prior to meeting with community, extensive work was done in partnership with the Accessibility Task Force to develop the proposed seven areas of focus for the draft strategy which align with both the Accessible Canada Act and the new Accessible British Columbia Act. In reviewing the information received from the dialogue sessions and the survey, it quickly became apparent that there was agreement between what we heard and the proposed areas of focus, with some additional themes emerging that need to be considered as we further refine the areas of focus.

#### **The proposed areas of focus are:**

1. Built Environment and Public Spaces
2. Transportation Programs, Services and Policies
3. Housing Programs, Policies, and Services
4. Information and Communication
5. Employment
6. Governance and Services
7. Capacity and Collaboration

#### **The new themes that emerged were:**

1. Income/ Financial
2. Racialization/Discrimination
3. Intersectionality
4. Reduce Stigma and Ableism through Awareness/ Education/ Training



## 5. Rights/ Advocacy

## 6. Social Isolation and Inclusion

## 7. Safety and Security

## 8. Access to Education

The summary that follows provides a high level overview of what we heard from the disability community.

The list below outlines the responses received in response to the question 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.
- 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.

When asked the questions about what gets in your way to contributing or participating in the City, and some potential recommendations for the City to implement to improve accessibility, the staff received the responses below from the community members. The responses are organized in alignment with the existing themes.

## Existing Key Themes

### 1. Built Environment and Public Spaces

(Urban policy, design planning and development)

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.

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*

- Mandatory automatic door openers and accessible washrooms for new commercial buildings.
- 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

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.

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.
- >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

## **2. 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.

“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*

- > 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.

### **3. 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.
- Financial support in retrofitting homes when/if an individual's status of being able-bodied changes

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*

#### **4. 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.
  - >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.

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*

- 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.

“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*

## 5. 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 feel comfortable or safe sharing information about their disability.
  - >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

## **6. 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.
- 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

## **7. 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.
- 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.
- 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 many emerging themes that were voiced in response 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. The following pages are the summary of responses.

## **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.
- 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.

## **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 experience.

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## 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 all 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.



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.

## **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 manoeuvring.
- 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.

## **F. HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE ENGAGEMENT PROCESS**

The community engagement process provided the space for people with disabilities to share their stories, insights, and feedback for the development of the Phase 1 of the Accessibility Strategy.

### **How We Collected and Analyzed the Information**

- The questions were developed in partnership with the Accessibility Task Force and staff from the Social Policy Research and Data Team.
- A debrief template was completed by City staff and/or organization representative for the purposes of improving sessions.

- Each of the targeted dialogue sessions were recorded with verbal consent.
- There was a note-taker for each session.
- Close captioning transcripts were obtained, reviewed and summarized.
- Summary reports from each dialogue session were reviewed and synthesized into key themes and emerging themes and shared with participants to verify accuracy.
- Shape Your City survey results were reviewed and integrated with the results from the targeted community dialogues
- More detailed coding and data analysis of the information received from the dialogue sessions and the survey will take place to support the delivery of the Phase 1 Accessibility Strategy by Q1 2022. This data will be integrated with themes and recommendations from other City and Advisory committee reports and engagement data from other projects.

### **Successes of the Community Engagement**

- ASL and CC being provided was welcomed.
- Participants were appreciative of the City creating 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 appreciated that they were open-ended.
- All participants enjoyed having the space to provide their feedback and suggestions.
- Many of the participants appreciated 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 allotted 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 2-hours is too long
- The survey did not have enough room for open text.
- Some people felt that the survey should have been only completed by persons with disabilities.
- The majority of the engagement happened over summer which may have limited the ability for some people to participate.

## **G. 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 comprehensive and in-depth analysis of what we heard is underway and will include information from additional sources including the Internal Staff Working Group, reports from Persons with Disabilities Advisory Committee and Seniors Advisory Committee and other community engagement data. This feedback and analysis will guide the writing of the draft Phase 1 of the Accessibility Strategy.

We will be recommending a much broader community engagement process to take place later in 2022 to ensure that the draft Strategy reflects the City's vision for creating a place where all people feel valued, respected and openly welcomed.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **MEET AND GREET – COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS**

The 411 Seniors Centre  
Autism Community Training (ACT)  
Alzheimer’s Association of British Columbia  
Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Agencies (AMSAA)  
BC Arthritis Association  
BC Aboriginal Network on Disability Society  
BC Centre for Ability  
Blind Beginnings  
Citizens for Accessible Neighbourhoods  
Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB)  
Canucks Autism Network  
Community Living BC  
Developmental Disabilities Association  
Disability Foundation  
Disability Alliance of BC  
Family Support Institute  
Health Initiative for Men (HIM)  
Inclusion BC  
Metro Vancouver Aboriginal Executive Council (MVAEC)  
MOSAIC  
Neil Squire Society  
PLAN Institute  
RainCity Housing and Support Society  
Rick Hansen Foundation  
Spinal Cord Injury BC  
Vancouver Coastal Health  
Wavefront Centre for Communication Accessibility  
West End Seniors Network

## **APPENDIX B**

### **DIALOGUE SESSIONS**

1. City Advisory Councils (Seniors Advisory Council, Persons with Disabilities Advisory Council and Transportation Advisory Council) – City-Led
2. Community Action Team – City-Led
3. Children, Youth and Families – City-Led
4. People with Intellectual Disabilities – Org-Led - CLBC and Developmental Disabilities Association
5. Queer Community – Org-Led: Citizens for Accessible Neighbourhoods
6. Seniors – City-Led
7. Ethno-cultural – Mosaic and AMSAA
8. Cross Disability Organizations – City-Led
9. Lived Experience – Cross Disability – City-Led
10. Lived Experience – Cross Disability – City-Led
11. Sex Workers – Org-Led: RainCity Housing and Support Society
12. Deaf and Hard of Hearing – Org-Led: Wavefront
13. Deaf and Hard of Hearing – Org-Led: Wavefront
14. City Staff – City-Led
15. Youth and Young Adults – City-Led
16. Indigenous Community – Org-Led

## APPENDIX C

### PARTICIPANT MANUAL

#### **Accessibility Strategy Participant Guide**

Thank you so much for registering for the dialogue session. We are looking forward to having this very important conversation with you as the City of Vancouver begins work on the development of an Accessibility Strategy.

Accessibility means being able to reach, understand, contribute to and use the places, information and services in our City. This Accessibility Strategy reflects the City's commitment to support the full participation of persons with disabilities by establishing and maintaining inclusive services, programs and infrastructure and by identifying, removing and preventing barriers.

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.

The proposed strategy reinforces the City's recognition of the rights, dignity, and independence of people with disabilities within our community and strengthens the City's ability to foster a culture of equity and inclusion that values and includes all residents, visitors and employees.

The City plans to have Phase 1 of Accessibility Strategy in place by Fall 2021. The first phase of the Strategy includes the development of a draft strategy which sets out key definitions, principles, areas of focus, identifies what needs to be done and a plan for how it will get done. To help create the draft strategy, the City will first host a series of conversations with persons with lived experience of disability, family members and/or caregivers and a number of community organizations who provide services. We want to hear the diverse perspectives. The second step will be to hear more voices through broader public engagement on the draft strategy once developed and then put the plan into action.

The City will be providing accommodations to support everyone's participation in the session. There will be sign language interpretation (ASL) and closed captioning during the session. There will also be a PowerPoint presentation. Please let us know if you need the presentation emailed to you in advance of the session.

After the session, we will be emailing you a survey as an opportunity to give feedback and further comments to the development of the strategy. In addition, it will give you the opportunity to keep in touch with us through the process.

**In this guide, you can find out more about:**

1. How to use Webex - this is the on-line, virtual platform we will be using for the conversation.
2. The key messages for the strategy
3. The areas of focus for the strategy
4. The role of the City
5. The session format – an agenda that outlines how we will spend our time together and the questions that will guide the conversation
6. Tips to help your participation

**To find out more about the City's work on accessibility:**

<https://vancouver.ca/people-programs/accessible-city.aspx> .

**If you require further information, please do reach out to Karen Lai, Accessibility Planner at 604.675-5926 or [Karen.Lai@vancouver.ca](mailto:Karen.Lai@vancouver.ca)**

**How to use Webex as the Virtual Platform:**

The City of Vancouver uses Webex as their on-line meeting platform. It is similar to Zoom or Teams if you are familiar with these platforms. Similar



to all other platforms, Webex requires a computer with Internet access or a phone. You can connect to Webex by computer or a phone.

Within your confirmation email, there is a link for you to log on to the meeting. It will look like the graphic to the right.

Please click the green button, “Join meeting”.

If you prefer to join by phone and not use Webex, the information to call in is provided.

By logging into the meeting via the Internet, you will be able to see the presenter’s computer screen. Please click the green button, “Join meeting”.

The main functions you will need to use for the targeted dialogue sessions will be:

1. Unmute/Mute button: this allows you to speak during the meeting. It is recommended that if you are not speaking, you keep yourself muted so that others cannot hear any background noises.
2. Start Video: this button allow you to turn on and off your camera during the session
3. Leave/End meeting: the red “x” button allows you leave at any point during the session
4. Access, Participant, Chat, and Note Panel: during the meeting, you can use this function to type your responses or to chat to other participants. There will be times in the session where responses are needed, so you can type in your responses, rather than sharing your responses verbally.
5. There is also a button called “reactions” where you can raise a hand to ask a question.

## **Breakout Rooms**

Depending on the number of participants in a session, we may have people move into smaller breakout rooms that will create the space for people to have the chance to speak. If breakout rooms will be used, the facilitator will provide information on how to move into breakout rooms during the session.

You will have the opportunity to leave the room whenever you want by clicking the red button labeled “x” at the bottom of your screen on the right side.

## **ACCESSIBILITY STRATEGY - KEY MESSAGES**

An overarching, long-term Accessibility Strategy supports the full participation of persons with disabilities, seniors and people with lived experience of mental health concerns or substance use, while creating a universally accessible city designed for all people.

### **Respecting the Rights, Dignity and Independence of Persons with Disabilities**

The commitment within the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCPRD) reinforces the responsibility of the City to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities and to promote respect for their inherent dignity.

### **Creating an Environment where all People feel Valued, Respected, and Openly Welcomed**

The City aims to strengthen its ability to create a culture of equity and inclusion, one that values and includes all residents, visitors and employees, including persons with disabilities, seniors and other inequitably treated groups. This Strategy focuses on identifying, preventing and removing barriers to full participation across City’s services, programs and infrastructure and making improvements for all.

### **Establishing an Environment for Equitable Access and Opportunity to Participate**

Persons with disabilities have traditionally not been included in planning and designing of municipal service delivery processes. People with disabilities need to be a part of decision-making process along with having the opportunity to participate in the planning and designing of municipal policies and service delivery procedures.

## **Fostering a Culture of Inclusion with an Accessibility Lens within the City**

Inclusion reflects a way of thinking that implements a sense of curiosity to ask questions, challenge our own assumptions and unconscious biases, and discover what we don't already know. The City is encouraging all departments and employees to instill this way of thinking with an accessibility lens to ensure that inclusion and equity are embedded in the operating practices, programs and services of every department in the City.

### **Recognizing that Individuals have Complex Identities**

The City is maintaining a broad definition of disability as it is part of the equity and inclusion efforts that contribute to improved social health and well-being. As part of this, the City acknowledges that people have multiple and diverse layers to their identities that influences their perspectives and experiences. In addition, these different layers of identities may intersect with each other and therefore this needs to be considered when addressing inequality and barriers to inclusion.

## **Aligning the City with the Federal and Provincial Accessibility Legislation**

### **Legislation**

In 2019, the federal legislation (Accessible Canada Act) was passed and work began on the BC Accessibility Legislation, which was proposed for Fall 2020. With the COVID pandemic, it 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 and the principles of the Federal legislation.

## **ACCESSIBILITY STRATEGY – AREAS OF FOCUS**

### **BUILT ENVIRONMENT**

(Urban policy, design planning and development)

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

## **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.

## **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.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION**

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

## **EMPLOYMENT**

Support the recruitment, accommodation, retention and promotion of employees with disabilities.

Creates a work environment that is accessible, diverse and inclusive.

## **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.

## **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.

## **THE ROLE OF THE CITY**

Municipal Government is the level of government that is closest to local people. Municipal governments are responsible for everyday things that make a city run (like what gets built where, water and sewers, garbage pickup and street cleaning).

There are also many aspects of daily life where the responsibilities are shared between different levels of government like housing, transportation, environmental protection and more.

The City of Vancouver has its own piece of legislation, the Vancouver Charter. This contains a set of rules that the City must follow. These rules outline how the City operates, and what bylaws the City Council can create, and how the budgets are set. It also has some special powers that are related to building code, permits, liability, and planning, electing a Park Board, and rules around how the City can borrow money when need.

The City of Vancouver has a number of departments such as Engineering, Planning and Arts and Culture. We also work in partnership with the Vancouver Library Board, Vancouver Police Board and Board of Parks and Recreation.

There are two important categories of people who work in municipal governments: elected officials and staff:

- Elected Officials (including the Mayor, Councillors, and in some places Park Board Commissioners) are elected by voters every four years. The City of Vancouver City Council is made up of one Mayor and ten City Councillors, while the Board of Parks and Recreation is made up of seven Park Board Commissioners. These elected officials make important decisions on how the City is run, and provide staff with guidance on which projects to work on.
- Municipal Staff are the people who make the city work. They are city planners, engineers, lawyers, emergency services personnel, community centre staff, and so much more.

The City of Vancouver has a lot of responsibilities such as:

- Water (including taps, fire hydrants, pipes and the supply to pools, fountains, etc.)
- Sewage and drainage
- Garbage and recycling
- Parks and public playgrounds (maintenance and construction)
- Community and Recreation Centres, and Libraries

- City Hall and other city or civic buildings
- Trees on public property
- Speed limits on city streets, including school and park zones (guided by Provincial laws)
- Street maintenance
- Street cleaning
- Sidewalks
- Bike lanes and greenways
- Parking (including restrictions and fees)
- Public transportation (shared with Provincial) including buses, Skytrain and Seabus
- Electricity and phone lines (shared with Provincial)
- Fire fighting
- Policing (Vancouver has it's own Police Board, but not all municipalities)
- Building code or the way buildings, windows doors, stairs, walls etc. are built (in Vancouver only)
- Zoning and permitting (deciding what kinds of things get built where), like how big yards are, how tall and wide buildings are, or where houses are vs. where businesses, and services are
- Business licences

**For more information, please visit the City's website at:  
[www.vancouver.ca](http://www.vancouver.ca)**

## **Dialogue Session**

1. Each session is scheduled for 2 hours. This will allow for dealing with any technical problems and introductions.
2. The conversation will be approximately 1.5 hours in length.
3. ASL and Close Captioning are provided for each session.
4. Sessions will be recorded.
5. There will be a facilitator and a note-taker.
6. The questions will also be available on the City's website if you have more that you would like to tell us.

1:30 Sign in and assistance with any technical issues

1:40 Land Acknowledgement, Welcome and Introductions

1:45 Overview of the Strategy

1:55 Question 1

2:20 Question 2

2:45 Question 3

3:10 Thank you and Closing

## **QUESTIONS**

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 participate in and contribute to community life in Vancouver?
3. What would make it easier for you or someone you know to participate in and contribute to community life in Vancouver?

## Tips for Participation

What you have to say is very important! There will be a facilitator for the session and the role of this person is to create the space for everyone to speak. Here are a few other suggestions that may help your voice be heard:

- Spend some time reading and reflecting on the background information and key messages of the Accessibility Strategy.
- Check out the link to the City website <https://vancouver.ca/people-programs/accessible-city.aspx> to learn more about what the City is currently doing to support accessibility.
- Feel free to bring a support person.
- Be on time for the session. If possible, join the meeting on time to ensure that your sound and other elements associated with Webex works for you
- Basic accommodations will be offered at all of the targeted dialogue sessions including:
  - >ASL interpretation and closed captioning
  - >Large text on the PowerPoint slides
  - >Color contrast on the PowerPoint slides

Should you require further accommodations to support you to participate, please let us know in advance of the session.

- To activate the closed captioning, please click the continue button. You should see this on the right side of the screen in the Multimedia panel where it says “You are connected to the event: Wavefront\_Cityof Vancouver”. And then scroll down
- Feel free to unmute yourself when you want to contribute to the discussion. There might be a slight delay when switching your microphone on, so please wait a few seconds before speaking.



- To encourage full participation in the dialogue sessions, please remember to:
  - >Come with an open and curious mind
  - >Listen actively to each other.
  - >Let everyone have a chance to express their point of view.
  - >Listen respectfully to each other’s perspectives
  - >Keep your stories short and to the point, as best as possible.
  - >If you have something you would like to discuss that is a personal matter, please reach out to the facilitator after the session.
- Each of the dialogue sessions will be facilitated. The facilitator will create the space to ensure all voices are heard.
- Depending on the size of the group, there will be the option of attending a smaller break-out group for responding to the second two questions. There will be an invitation box displayed in the middle of your screen and you will have to click to join the break out room.
- The chat box will be available throughout the session. Please feel free to use this at any point throughout the time
- You will also be able to express yourself throughout the session without turning on your microphone. You can click on the “smiley face” button and it will provide you with a list of animated reactions you can use to express yourself non-verbally. This includes “raising a hand” to ask a question.
- You are free to leave the room by clicking the red button, “leave meeting” at any point during the session.