

# Report to Council



**Date:** March 17, 2025  
**To:** Council  
**From:** City Manager  
**Subject:** Draft Accessibility Plan  
**Department:** Active Living & Culture

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**Recommendation:**

THAT Council receives, for information, the report from the Active Living & Culture Department dated March 17, 2025 with respect to the draft Accessibility Plan;

AND THAT Council directs staff to proceed with the second phase of engagement and preparation of the final plan, as outlined in the report from the Active Living & Culture Department dated March 17, 2025.

**Purpose:**

To review the draft Accessibility Plan and provide direction on finalizing the plan.

**Background:**

According to Statistics Canada, 27% of Canadians and 28.6% of people in BC aged 15 and older had at least one disability in 2022. The Accessible BC Act came into effect in 2022. It provides a framework to identify, remove and prevent barriers to accessibility and requires public sector organizations to have an Accessibility Plan that is reviewed every three years.

Significant progress has been made to develop a 5-year Accessibility Plan which outlines strategic goals and actions to enhance accessibility across the city. Early in 2024, the City hired Happy Cities (HC) and Meaningful Access Consulting (MAC) to lead the development of the City's Accessibility Plan. The consulting team has done a review of existing policies and plans, conducted extensive community engagement, and reviewed priorities and action items with City staff and the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC). The draft Accessibility Plan (attached) provides a summary of their review, what we learned from the community, and a list of recommendations and action items that have been reviewed with staff to ensure they can reasonable be further scoped and planned for when the final plan is delivered.

## Discussion:

The draft Accessibility Plan focuses on five core areas under the City's jurisdiction:

- Built environment
  - Parks & open spaces, city facilities
- Transportation
  - Sidewalks, roads, parking, bike lanes and public transit
- Programs and services
  - Recreation, culture, social
- Information and communication
  - Printed, digital, in-person
- Employment
  - Hiring processes, accessibility supports for employees

The plan was developed through comprehensive community engagement that included a wide range of participants with diverse experiences. To gather feedback, a number of channels were available:

- **Surveys** – close to 300 people filled out the survey in the fall of 2024
- **Focus groups** – people with lived experience were invited to participate in 90-minute focus groups
- **Community pop-up events** – usually staged in conjunction with an event or service focused on accessibility, over 150 people provided feedback on barriers they face in their community.
- Multiple **meetings** with the Accessibility Advisory Committee to collect feedback and guidance on the plan development and the local engagement process

The most common disabilities reported were mobility related, chronic illness, and age-related health issues. A high number of people who participated in community engagement relied on a mobility device. Overall, the top priorities that were identified were buildings, transportation, and programs and services. A detailed summary of the engagement results are included in the draft plan.

In addition to hearing from members of the community, the team also engaged with department heads and senior leadership to ensure that the action items suggested are achievable. The draft plan has almost 30 recommendations and 60 action items that the City will work to accomplish over the next 10 years, subject to feasibility analysis and funding availability. The actions are broken out into short (under 2 years), medium (2-4 years) and long term (5+ years) to help set targets and timelines.

A link to the draft report will be shared with the public for a final cycle of feedback on [kelowna.ca/accessibility](https://kelowna.ca/accessibility). In addition, City staff will reach out to invested organizations and individuals working in community to help refine the final plan. The goal for this final round of engagement is to understand how close we have come to striking a balance between the ideas emerging from community and the regulatory, financial and technical parameters to how a City can implement those ideas over time. We want to hear from the people that this plan will most impact to ensure that by implementing the action items described, the City will reduce barriers and improve accessibility in our community. It's also possible that all actions are well received by community but that the sequencing or prioritization of actions over time may need to be adjusted for greatest impact.

Following the next round of engagement, the final plan will be drafted for Council endorsement in late Spring of this year. Along with the final report, staff will present an implementation plan which will

include details on how staff will address and report on action items, anticipated budget requirements and potential related grant opportunities.

It should be noted that the Accessible Transportation Strategy is being developed simultaneously. The first round of engagement and the draft recommendations of the Accessibility Plan have been co-created with the Transportation team, so that community members were given centralized, more conveniently timed engagement opportunities to provide input to both projects. An additional round of engagement and refined recommendations will be conducted through the Accessible Transportation Strategy later this year, and so the transportation recommendations within the Accessibility Plan remain at a high-level at this time, recognizing Council will have further opportunities to review detailed recommendations related to transportation improvements as part of that project.

### **Conclusion:**

The draft plan was created through a thoughtful and collaborative process that included perspectives of people with lived experience of disability, organizations which serve and support people with disabilities and the staff who will oversee the implementation of the plan. Following another brief round of engagement to ensure that the plan resonates with community members and make final refinements it will be brought forward to Council again for endorsement and implementation.

### **Internal Circulation:**

Communications  
Office of the City Clerk  
Integrated Transportation

### **Considerations applicable to this report:**

*Legal/Statutory Authority:* As per the Accessible British Columbia Act:

- (1) An organization must develop a plan to identify, remove and prevent barriers to individuals in or interacting with the organization.
- (2) An organization must review and update its accessibility plan at least once every 3 years.
- (3) In developing and updating its accessibility plan, an organization must consider the following principles:
  - (a) inclusion;
  - (b) adaptability;
  - (c) diversity;
  - (d) collaboration;
  - (e) self-determination;
  - (f) universal design
- (4) In developing its accessibility plan, an organization must consult with its accessibility committee.
- (5) In updating its accessibility plan, an organization must
  - (a) consider any comments received under section 12 [public feedback], and
  - (b) consult with its accessibility committee.

*Consultation and Engagement:* As described throughout the report, extensive public engagement has occurred to develop the draft plan and a final opportunity for public engagement on the draft plan content will occur as a next step prior to presenting Council with the final report later this spring

**Considerations not applicable to this report:**

*Legal/Statutory Procedural Requirements:*

*Existing Policy:*

*Financial/Budgetary Considerations:*

*Communications Comments:*

Submitted by: M. Siggers, Community & Neighbourhood Services Manager

**Approved for inclusion:** J. Gabriel, Divisional Director, Active Living & Culture

**Attachments:**

Attachment 1: Draft Accessibility Plan

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