

Everyone Welcome: The Kelowna Accessibility Plan

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Why are we here?



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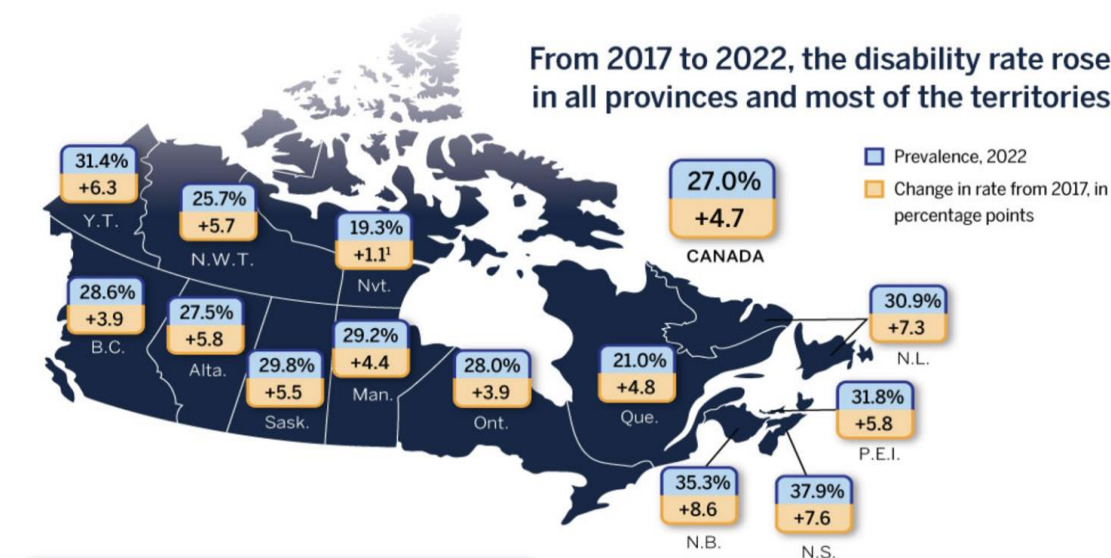
Why an Accessibility Plan for Kelowna?

In BC, municipalities are required to have an accessibility plan due to the **Accessible British Columbia Act**, which was passed in June 2021.

The goal is to create a more inclusive and accessible environment for everyone, promoting meaningful participation in communities and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

People with disabilities in Kelowna

- According to 2017 census data, 36,350 people - **23.8% of Kelowna's population - reported having a disability.** This has likely increased.



What is an accessibility plan?

Accessibility plans establish steps for municipalities to identify, address, and prevent barriers to participation in civic life.

Kelowna's plan focuses on:

- **General accessibility**
- **Built environment**
- **Transportation**
- **Programs and services**
- **Information and communication**
- **Employment**

Project overview



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Project overview - July 2024 to Spring 2025

- ✓ Summer 2024: Kick-off meeting with AAC + Environmental scan
- ✓ September 2024: Round 1 Engagement (focus groups, public survey)
 - ✓ In-person and digital
 - ✓ November 2024: What We Learned report
- ✓ October-November 2024: Accessibility Plan Draft
 - ✓ Informed by Environmental Scan and Engagement
 - ✓ City working session
- ✓ November 2024 - March 2025: Staff revisions
 - Council presentation
 - Digital survey
- **Q2 2025: Kelowna Accessibility Plan**

Engagement & Select Recommendations



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What we did

- Pop-ups
- Focused engagement
- Interviews
- Focus Groups
- Digital survey

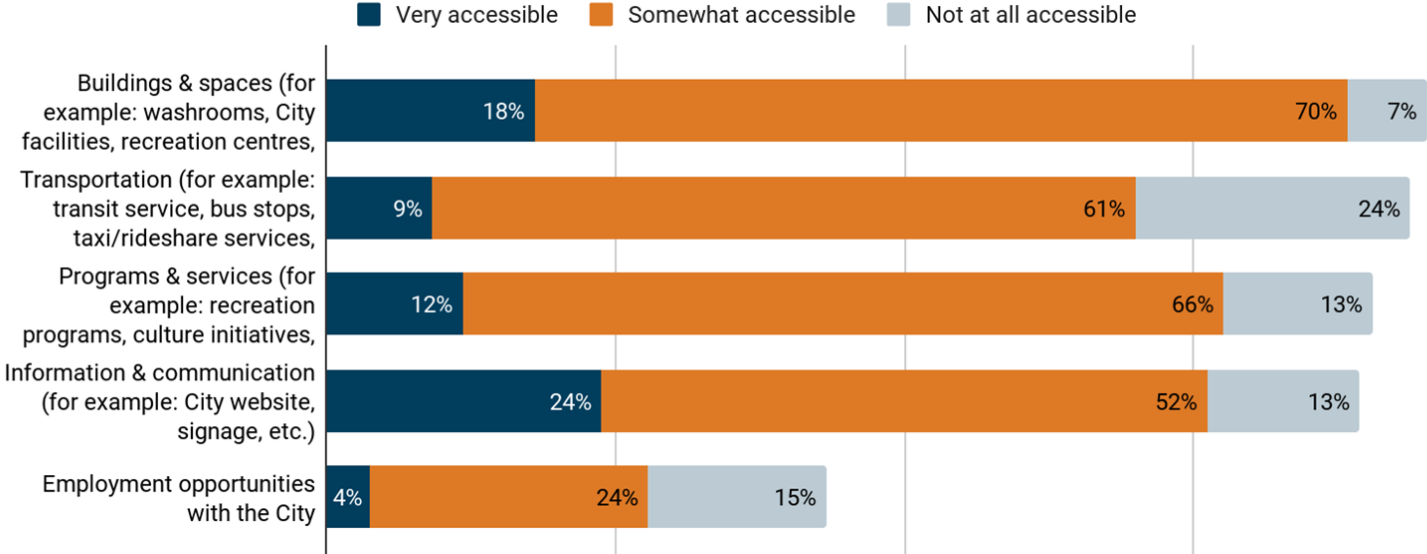


What we learned

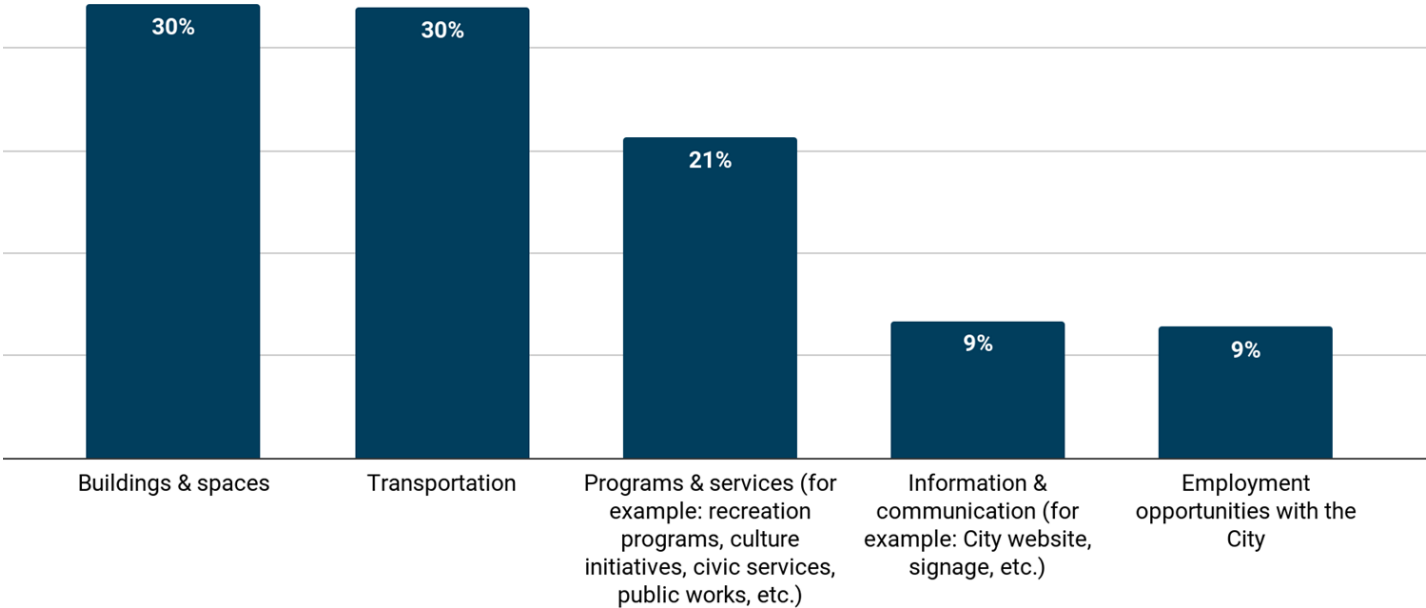
What does an accessible Kelowna mean to you?



How accessible is Kelowna?



What is your top priority for improving accessibility?





Built Environment

This includes City parks and open spaces, sidewalks and roads, and City facilities, including City Hall.

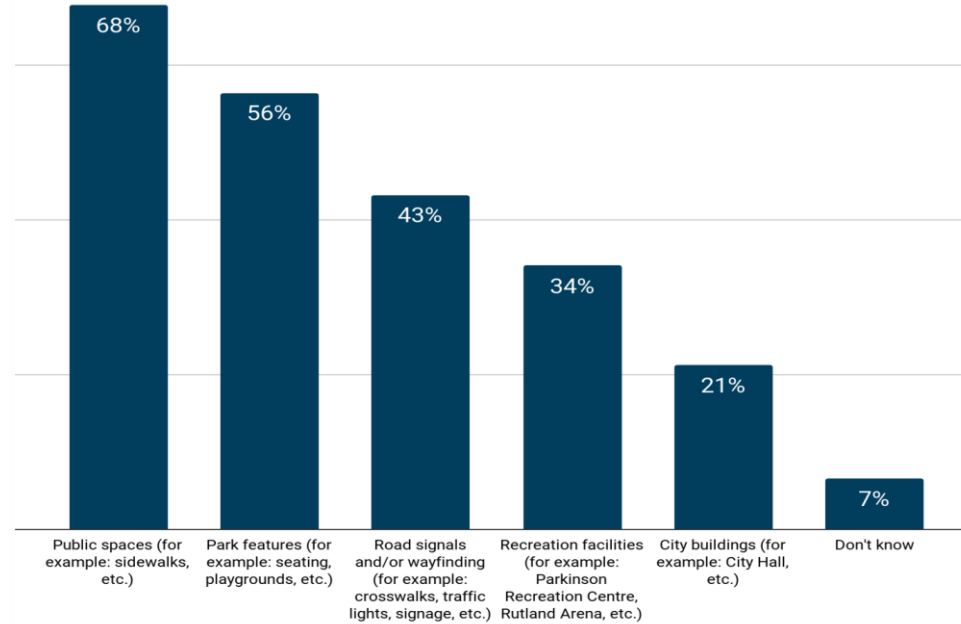


Built environment: The starting block

- Kelowna's OCP includes clear direction for making more City infrastructure more accessible.
- Kelowna achieved Age-friendly BC Community recognition for the **Community for All** plan
- The City includes accessible items in all new parks and playgrounds, most prominently at Strathcona Beach Park
- The Accessible Measures for Hotels & Motels bylaw ensures accessibility for visitors.



Built environment: Barriers



When it comes to City buildings and spaces (the "built environment"), where do you face barriers?



Built environment: Key recommendations

- Improve accessibility of City facilities through audits, upgrades and phased implementation.
- Improve accessibility of City parks and playgrounds.
- Develop a plan to increase accessibility to the lake, ensuring that everyone can access outdoor recreation opportunities.
- Increase access to adaptable and accessible housing.



Transportation

This includes City sidewalks, parking (on streets and City-owned parking lots), snow removal at these locations and City facilities.

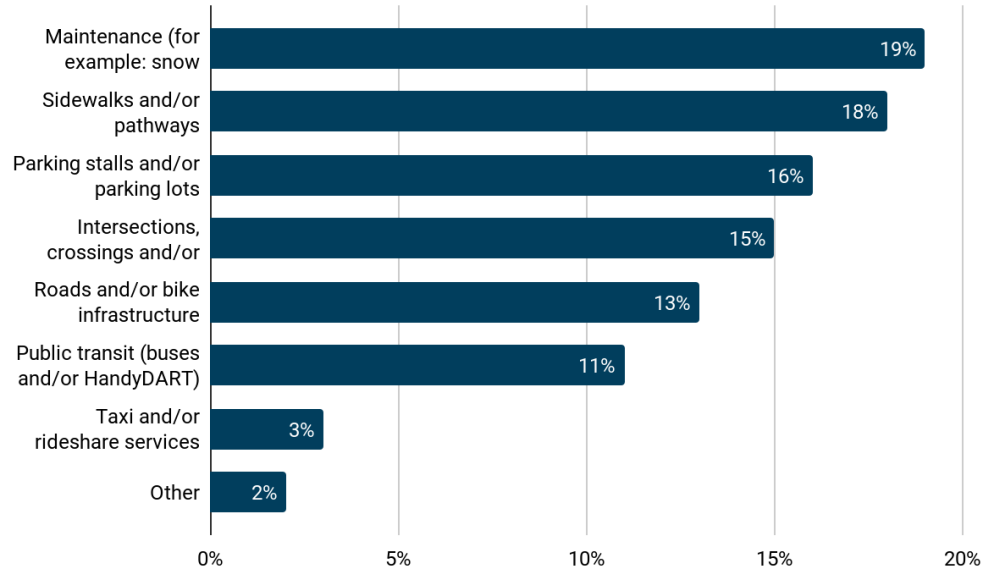


Transportation: The starting block

- Kelowna has a list of pedestrian and accessibility-related improvements that are gradually being implemented.
- The City clears snow and ice from key areas (bus stops, school areas) within 24 hours
- Kelowna has HandyDart service
- The City assessed sidewalk quality and needs for maintenance annually



Transportation: Barriers



When it comes to travelling around Kelowna, where do you face barriers?



Transportation: Key recommendations

- Develop a Transportation Accessibility Strategy
- Improve accessibility of sidewalks, pathways, intersections and crosswalks
- Minimize conflicts between pedestrians and other users



Programs and Services

This includes programs and services offered at the City's parks, recreation and cultural facilities.



Programs and Services: The starting block

- The City offers 35+ adaptive recreation programs and services
- The City offers accessibility and inclusion training for front of house staff
- The Parkinson Recreation Centre development team includes accessibility consultants
- Kelowna offers low cost accessible passes for recreation



Programs and Services: Barriers

- Program Availability and Communication
 - Difficulty in finding information about events
 - Challenges with digital communication
- Program Diversity
 - Limited options for seniors, teens, and people with intellectual disabilities
- Location of Programs
 - Many programs are concentrated in certain areas, while other areas are underserved
 - Difficulty accessing locations like Parkinson Rec Center due to distance from bus stops



Programs and Services: Key recommendations

- Determine opportunities to collaborate with key organizations to maximize the impact of public funding
- In recreation facilities, offer low-sensory/quiet times or spaces for individuals who are neurodivergent or sensitive to sensory stimulation.
- Consider education and disability awareness training to City staff.
- Raise awareness among public event organizers around increasing accessibility at permitted events.



Information and communication

This includes:

- printed, digital, and in-person communication, closed captioning, interpreters, alternative methods of communication, accessible websites and PDFs.



Information and Communications: The starting block

- Widespread one-way and two-way digital communication opportunities for residents to interact with the City
- City staff have a strong understanding of how to conduct effective engagement and outreach



Information and communication: Barriers

- Emergency communication issues
 - Lack of crisis services and public phones
 - Difficulty finding clear contact information
- Online-only information limits access
 - Seniors and people who don't use or have access to digital media, struggle to connect, engage and learn about City activities.
- Accessibility and language barriers
 - Lack of ASL interpreters at civic events
 - Problems with text-to-speech functionality



Information and communication: Key recommendations

- Improve communication about accessibility features and services.
- Improve accessibility of the City of Kelowna's communications.
- Review the website overall for accessibility moving towards meeting the current Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) best practices.



Employment

This includes:

- Ease of access to City hiring processes, and types of accessibility supports provided throughout the hiring process;

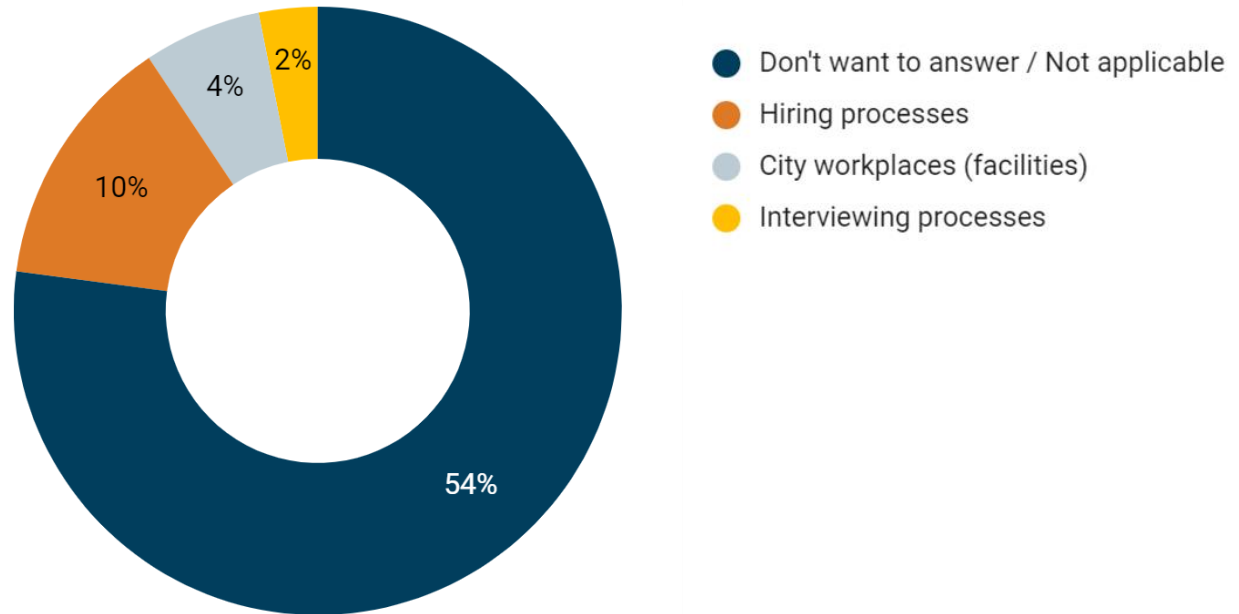


Employment: The starting block

- City's DEI Strategic Plan is being implemented and is enhancing inclusion
- City's HR department is working to build relationships with community organizations to enable employment opportunities for people with disabilities
- Through DEI Strat Plan, City is implementing flexible work opportunities.



Employment: Barriers



What barriers do you face around employment with the City of Kelowna?



Employment: Key recommendations

- Improve staff competency related to accessibility and disability.
- Increase recruitment and hiring of people with disabilities and older adults.
- Improve programming for workplace accommodations.

Next steps



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And now, what?

- Round 2 Engagement
- Final revisions to the plan
- Final presentation to Council
 - Implementation plan and cost implications
 - Staff will conduct a scan of potential grants to support implementation

Thank you!



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