



Special Accessibility Advisory Committee

**Wednesday, March 11, 2025
5:30 p.m.**

**Committee Room G, Basement & Zoom
New Westminster City Hall, 511 Royal Avenue**

Present: Councillor Jaimie McEvoy (Chair)
Paul Backman
Karen Basran
Anne Belanger
Hazel Fitzpatrick*
Vic Leach
Catherine (Katie) Marshall
Karen Morgan*
Leonor Vlug*

Absent: Hilary Benoit
Gary Steeves
Colleen Vogler

**Attendance by electronic means*

1. CALL TO ORDER & LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Chair called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. and recognized with respect that New Westminster is on the unceded and unsundered land of the Halkomelem speaking peoples. It was acknowledged that colonialism has made invisible their histories and connections to the land. It was recognized that, as a City, we are learning and building relationships with the people whose lands we are on.

2. AGENDA ADDITIONS & DELETIONS

MOVED and SECONDED

THAT the Agenda of the Special Accessibility Advisory Committee meeting held on March 11, 2025 be approved as circulated.

CARRIED

3. PRESENTATIONS & REPORTS

3.1 People, Parks and Play – Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Plan

With the aid of a PowerPoint presentation, Mitchell Reardon, Director, Happy Cities, accompanied by Erika Mashig, Deputy Director, Parks and Recreation, spoke regarding various updates pertaining to accessibility for the Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Plan (Plan).

M. Reardon advised that feedback received from the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AcAC) identified potential areas of improvement in accessibility and have been integrated into the draft Plan.

Several strengths were noted in the City's current accessibility efforts, including:

- the accessibility of Westminster Quay;
- communications and outreach using both digital and traditional media;
- Century House programming and support; and
- accessibility at tāmeseŵtx^w Aquatic and Community Centre.

Conversely, the following accessibility challenges were noted:

- a lack of accessible washrooms, seating, sports fields, trails, and viewing areas at sports venues;
- a lack of accessibility-friendly registration processes for recreation programming;
- not enough accessible parking near parks and recreation facilities;
- the quality of pathways in and around parks;
- inclusion and accessibility are being muddled together;
- lack of regular upkeep at key parks, such as Westminster Pier Park;
- aging playgrounds and recreation facilities;
- the need for additional spaces and facilities, and age-appropriate programming for seniors;
- limited staff understanding of the diverse accessibility needs of residents; and
- challenges in accessing to the Parks and Recreation Financial Assistance Program.

The Draft Parks and Recreation Plan contains various strategic directions, four of which were identified as opportunities to enhance accessibility, including i) expand, renew, and optimize park amenities, ii) expand, renew, and optimize indoor recreation facilities iii) provide inclusive and equitable opportunities and iv) improve and expand core services.

Staff noted the Plan's strategic directions would facilitate accessibility enhancements, such as:

- ensuring all new playgrounds include accessible features, building one new playground to universal design standards, and including accessible garden plots at all three new community gardens;
- building new facilities to Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification Gold;
- providing inclusive and equitable opportunities for all through the following initiatives:
 - i. universal accessibility at facilities and park amenities (e.g. accessible washrooms; low stimulation spaces, kits and programming; universally accessible play equipment at recreation facilities and playgrounds);
 - ii. communicate accessibility features at each facility;
 - iii. ensure programs that are accessible to people with cognitive and/or physical disabilities are easily identifiable online and in the Activity Guide;
 - iv. provide regular accessibility training for front of house to meet the needs of people with cognitive and/or physical disabilities;
 - v. continue to promote activities and conduct outreach using a mix of digital and traditional media;
 - vi. ensure that accessible programs listed in the Activity Guide and online are clearly marked and detail the parts of accessibility that they fulfill;
 - vii. ensure that online sign-up forms are accessible;
 - viii. communicate in plain language;
 - ix. identify and promote New Westminster's accessible trails and detail the accessibility features offered;
 - x. collect data to make data informed decisions about programs, facilities, and resource allocation;
 - xi. review and revise existing policies and procedures to ensure they reflect priorities related to equity and inclusion; and
 - xii. develop and strengthen partnerships with community organizations; and
- improve and expand core services by expanding access to Parks and Recreation Financial Assistance program and reducing administration steps needed to apply for Parks and Recreation Financial Assistance Program.

In response to questions from the Committee, staff advised that:

- there are a variety of communication methods at City community centres, with potential for further initiatives in order to be more friendly to residents with accessibility needs; and

- consultants are engaged in an ongoing process of obtaining feedback from community members through the City's BeHeard page.

The Committee considered various additional accessibility concerns, including:

- improved communication on the City website;
- audible and visible alerts at crossroads for those requiring travel to facilities;
- increased funding for those requiring accessibility-friendly programs;
- seeking input and assessment from the Rick Hansen Foundation in order to provide targeted feedback; and
- consideration was given to the potential for the City to offer accessibility training.

3.2 City-wide Toilet Strategy

With the aid of a PowerPoint presentation, Annie Sudeyko, Social Planning and Homelessness Prevention Supervisor, accompanied by Mariam Larson, Consulting Gerontologist, spoke regarding the toilet strategy goals and background information.

A. Sudeyko provided background information on key issues related to toilet access in New Westminster, noting that access is a human rights issue, and that the response to the COVID-19 pandemic made known the gaps in existing toilet infrastructure. It was noted that Canadian municipalities experience significant challenges in implementing comprehensive toilet strategies, in part due to questions regarding jurisdiction and supplying the necessary funding.

The City-wide Toilet Strategy (CTS) will:

- assess the current landscape by reviewing the locations, hours, required maintenance and accessibility of publicly funded and semi-public toilets in the city;
- learn from other jurisdictions and interest groups to identify best practices and partnerships for providing public toilets;
- identify gaps and needs by analyzing and engaging with user groups to understand access issues and needs across the city;
- engage with key user groups, community service providers, businesses, and others to identify potential solutions;
- synthesize findings from all research and engagement activities and develop recommendations that will inform the final strategy; and
- the CTS is currently in the process of assessing the applicability of findings and aims to initiate Phase 3 in the summer of 2025.

A situational analysis on all publicly available toilets in the city was conducted to better understand geographic distribution across the city, gaps in seasonal availability, gaps in hours of operation, maintenance and cleaning schedules, and the overall accessibility and quality of publicly available toilets. High-level analysis indicated:

- most of the toilets in the city are public and managed by the City;
- in general, more densely populated areas have wider access to toilets compared to areas that are more residential or industrial;
- there are very few toilets that are available in the evening (between 6:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m.), and even more limited options overnight;
- information on maintenance and cleaning schedules was limited, so the quality of all toilets was difficult to assess; and
- there is no one single information source that provides up to date information about all toilets in the city, making wayfinding difficult.

In response to questions from the Committee, staff advised that:

- there will be two community engagement sessions taking place at Century House, and further engagement with various non-profit groups in the city; and
- there are two publicly available, 24/7 accessible toilets located at the New Westminster Police Department building.

The Committee considered:

- the size of accessible washroom stalls, noting the importance of taking into account the need for enough space and configuration of the washroom to accommodate a mobility aid and a care worker;
- readily available location and associated wayfinding is important to providing publicly available toilets as a service;
- users on mobility devices may have additional difficulties accessing washrooms which are not specifically designed for accessibility;
- how to use braille for residents which are vision impaired and require a public washroom;
- questions remain how a user can alert those nearby that they are in need of assistance or if there is an emergency in the washroom; and
- the potential adoption of a bylaw which regulates how toilets are to be available to the public if inside a private business.

3.3 Transportation – Bus Stops and Bike Lanes

With the aid of a PowerPoint presentation, Lacey Hirtle, Transportation Engineer, accompanied by Mike Anderson, Manager, Transportation, spoke regarding accessibility elements related to bus stops adjacent to cycling infrastructure.

L. Hirtle noted challenges of floating bus stops, including pedestrian-bike conflict and the navigational challenges faced by community members with accessibility needs. The City utilizes the BC Design Guide for Bus Stops Adjacent to Cycling Infrastructure developed by TransLink to determine the design of bus stops in the City and, if necessary, hires consultants to review complex designs.

The East Sixth Avenue Project was highlighted and emphasis was placed on bus stops being as inclusive as possible, noting that the City Transportation team engaged with the accessibility community in order to refine the design.

The Committee noted that:

- micromobility devices increase the complexity of roads and significantly alter reaction times, which can be dangerous in urban environments;
- the Crosstown Greenway is a bike path in the vicinity of East Sixth Avenue which is significantly utilized and there should be considerations to expand its width and usage, rather than create additional bike paths which interface with transit and pedestrian infrastructure;
- vibration grooves and high-visibility painting on paths can mitigate dangerous riding behaviour; and
- further education efforts for cyclists and micromobility users may benefit the community.

4. ADJOURNMENT

MOVED and SECONDED

THAT the meeting adjourn (7:21 p.m.).

CARRIED

Minutes – Special Accessibility Advisory Committee – March 11, 2025

Certified a true and correct copy of the Minutes of the Special Accessibility Advisory Committee meeting held on March 11, 2025.

Councillor Jaimie McEvoy
CHAIR

Marius Mikleä
ASSISTANT CORPORATE OFFICER