



City of
Courtenay

Accessibility Plan





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Prepared by the City of Courtenay's
Corporate Services department.



Land Acknowledgement

The City of Courtenay respectfully acknowledges that we are located within the unceded traditional territory of the K'ómoks First Nation.

The City of Courtenay has adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) as its framework for Indigenous reconciliation. Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2007, UNDRIP establishes a universal framework of minimum standards for the survival, dignity, and well-being of Indigenous peoples worldwide. It builds upon existing international human rights standards and fundamental freedoms as they apply to the specific rights and experiences of Indigenous peoples.

In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission identified UNDRIP as the foundational framework for reconciliation at all levels of government and across all sectors of Canadian society.

Courtenay's commitment to reconciliation is embedded as a core community value within the Official Community Plan's four cardinal directions: reconciliation, community well-being, equity, and climate action. The City has also prioritized strengthening its relationship with K'ómoks First Nation and advancing reconciliation through its Strategic Priorities.

City of Courtenay

Vision

A barrier-free Courtenay where every resident and visitor can fully participate, thrive, and belong — regardless of ability.

Commitment

The City of Courtenay is committed to fostering an inclusive and accessible community for all residents and visitors. People living with disabilities deserve equitable access to City services, programs, facilities, and public spaces in ways that respect their dignity and independence.

Like our Comox Valley local government partners, we are taking steps to remove barriers and build more connected, accessible communities.

This accessibility plan is a living document. It will continue to grow and evolve through ongoing community engagement, learning, and adaptation as new needs and opportunities emerge.

The City is committed to making steady progress, with actions implemented over time and guided by available capacity, timelines, and budget considerations.



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Goals

- **Identify and remove barriers** in City-owned buildings, public spaces, facilities, programs, and services.
- **Prevent new barriers** by applying accessible design, inclusive policies, and universal standards in planning and decision-making.
- **Engage the community** by ensuring people with diverse abilities and experiences help guide accessibility improvements.
- **Track progress and improve over time** by reviewing results each year and updating this plan every three years based on feedback, learning, and emerging needs.



Comox Valley Social Planning Society: Accessibility committee meeting

Message from the Accessibility Committee

The Accessibility Committee is made up of community members committed to making Courtenay a place where everyone can participate fully. Together, we have worked with City staff and residents to help shape this plan, share lived experiences, and identify barriers that still need to be addressed.

Accessibility is not only about City projects—it is about how our entire community works together. This plan is one step toward removing barriers and creating spaces, services, and attitudes that include everyone.

Definitions from Comox Valley

Local Governments Accessibility Framework

Accessibility is the degree to which a product, service, program or environment is available to all.

A barrier is anything that prevents the full and equal participation in society of people living with disabilities. Barriers come in many forms, including physical, architectural, attitudinal and technological.

The aim of accessibility is to consider whether a program, service or environment can be used by everyone however they may encounter it.

Equity is the policy or practice of treating everyone fairly by; acknowledging each unique situation and person, accounting for the differences in each person's starting point, ensuring equal opportunity, allocating the exact resources or support based on the need of the person that is required to reach an equal outcome.

The aim of equity is to ensure that every person has equal access to benefits or outcomes based on the specific needs of that person.

Inclusion is the practice or policy of involving and integrating all groups, especially those who have been historically excluded, who suffer discrimination or who live with disabilities. Inclusion is the extent to which a person feels a sense of belonging and value within their community. Inclusion is a universal human right.

The aim of inclusion is to create, foster and sustain conditions that allow every person to be fully themselves, feel accepted and be treated equally.

Belonging is a feeling of being happy and comfortable as part of a group. Belonging is a positive relationship with other members of a group because they welcome you and accommodate you. Belonging is one of the most basic human needs and is crucial for good mental health.

The aim of belonging is to create space for people to be safe, seen, accepted, valued and connected.

Policy Statement

The City of Courtenay is committed to identifying, preventing, and removing barriers that limit full and equitable participation in community life. Accessibility is a shared responsibility that informs how we design our spaces, deliver our services, and engage with residents. Through proactive planning, collaboration, and continuous improvement, the City will integrate accessibility into every policy, program, and decision-making process.

We recognize that accessibility goes beyond physical infrastructure. It includes attitudes, communication, information and systemic structures. The City will continue to work in partnership with people living with disabilities, community organizations and staff to ensure our actions reflect values of inclusion, equity and respect.

This policy reflects the City's ongoing commitment to reconciliation, recognizing that accessibility and inclusion are essential to building a community where everybody belongs and contributes.

Our guiding framework



Aerial view of the Comox Valley

Principles

The following six principles from the Comox Valley Local Governments Accessibility Framework guided the development of this Accessibility Plan.

Inclusion

Everyone should be able to participate fully in community life with autonomy, independence, and choice.

Adaptability

Accessibility needs evolve over time. Services, policies, and spaces must adapt as technology, standards, and community understanding change.

Diversity

People are respected for their differences and lived experiences, including disability or ability, age, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, religious beliefs, and immigration status.

Collaboration and engagement

Accessibility is a shared responsibility. Local governments commit to working with community members, organizations, and partners to remove barriers and build a more accessible community.

Intersectionality

Some people experience multiple forms of discrimination at the same time. Barriers related to ableism, racism, sexism, ageism, homophobia, transphobia, and classism can compound and create greater inequities.

Respect

Everyone should be treated with dignity and respect. An accessible community supports belonging, well-being, and positive mental health for all.



Seal Bay washrooms in collaboration with CVRD

Other Legislation and Existing Frameworks

Accessible BC Act (2021)

The Accessible BC Act is a provincial law that requires municipalities to take steps to identify, remove, and prevent barriers to accessibility.

Under the Act, local governments must establish an accessibility committee, develop and publish an accessibility plan, and create a way for community members to provide feedback and report barriers they encounter.

The City of Courtenay will review and update this plan every three years, incorporating community feedback and lessons learned along the way.

Comox Valley local governments accessibility framework (2023)

In 2025, the City launched an update to its accessibility strategy. In the Comox Valley, the City of Courtenay works in partnership with the Comox Valley Regional District, the Town of Comox, the Village of Cumberland, and the Comox Valley Accessibility Committee through a shared accessibility framework.

This regional collaboration helps local governments coordinate efforts, share knowledge, and work together to build more accessible communities across the Comox Valley.

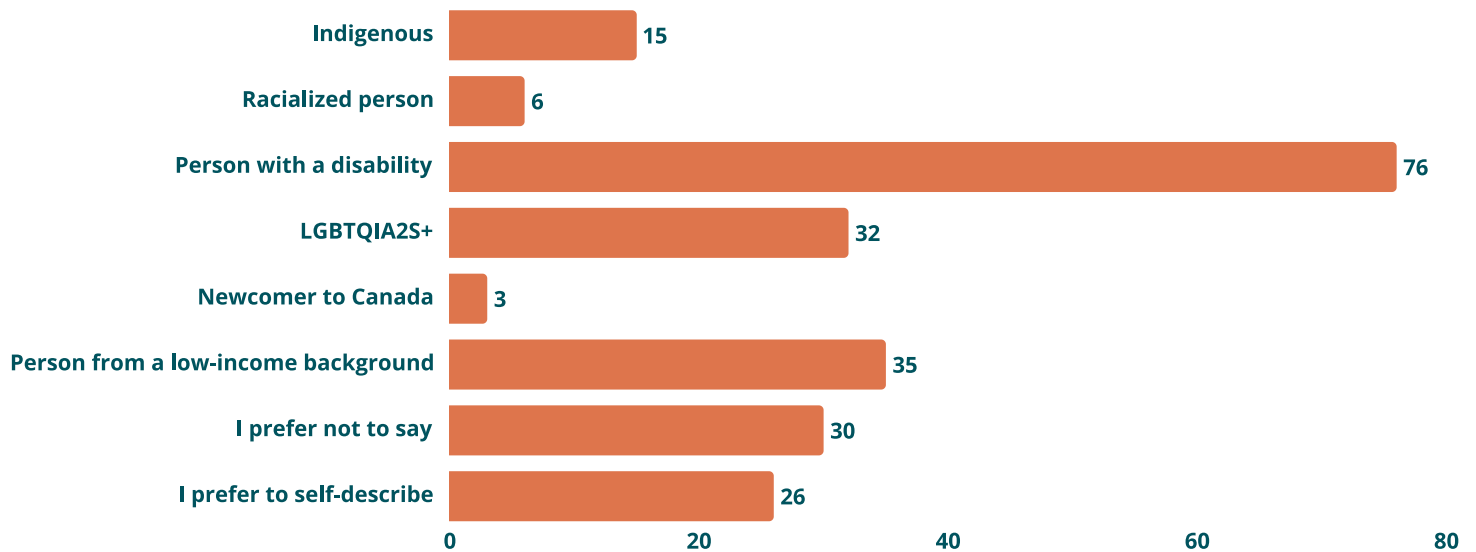
Public engagement and consultations

The feedback we received helped us better understand the barriers people experience in Courtenay and identify priorities for action. This plan represents one step in an ongoing conversation with the community.

The City invited input from a range of community members and organizations, including:

- Members of the public, including people living with disabilities, their families, caregivers and other residents
- The Comox Valley Social Planning Society Accessibility Committee, which shared local expertise and lived experience related to accessibility in the region

Equity-deserving Groups



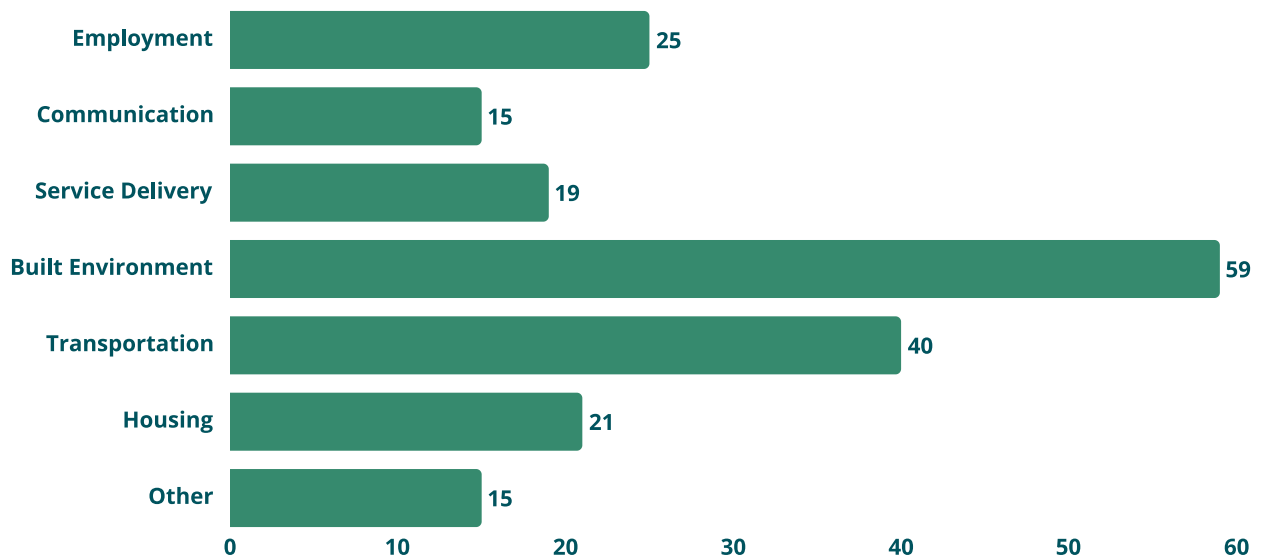
“Listen to people with lived experiences and consult and collaborate with us and action their recommendations. A win for disabled people is a win for everyone!”

How input was gathered

To develop this plan, the City used the following engagement activities:

- **Online and paper public engagement survey** – Open from December 2025 to January 2026, the survey received 149 responses. Participants identified barriers in City spaces, services, programs and information, and highlighted what is working well and where improvements are needed.
- **Accessibility committee review** – The Comox Valley Social Planning Society Accessibility Committee reviewed the draft plan and provided feedback on priorities, actions and recommendations.

Did the barrier relate to any of the following?



“More light signal crosswalks as they are so very helpful to both pedestrians and drivers. Have accessibility users be integral to planning and design.”

Priorities & action items

Built environment

Vision: A built environment that evolves to offer safe, comfortable, and dignified access to buildings, public spaces, and services.

Objective: To improve accessibility in the built environment, the City will focus on identifying barriers, assessing standards, and integrating accessibility into future infrastructure planning.



Wheelchair ramp at the Native Sons Hall

1. Conduct an accessibility audit of employee areas in City buildings

- Identify and document barriers in staff-only spaces.
- Rank issues based on severity and alignment with planned building upgrades or capital projects.

2. Maintain an inventory of accessibility barriers

- Develop and maintain an updated list of barriers in sidewalks, City buildings, and public spaces.
- Update and expand the audit of public facilities and spaces, transportation systems and gathering places in consultation with the community, to evaluate accessibility. Prioritize improvements that provide functional barrier-free options.
- Consider options for capital renewal to address identified barriers over time.

3. Assess sidewalk accessibility across the City

- Work with the Accessibility Committee to inform sidewalk accessibility standards.
- Inspect sidewalks to identify barriers, gaps between sidewalks, or areas requiring improvement.
- Create a priority list of repairs and upgrades based on severity, capacity, and alignment with scheduled capital projects, and in consultation with the Accessibility Committee.

4. Raise awareness and support accessibility improvements in the community

- Share resources with local organizations and businesses about improving accessibility in public spaces.
- Provide information about available funding programs and grant opportunities.

Priorities & action items

Built environment con't

5. Review design standards through the Strategic Transportation Plan

- Evaluate sidewalk design and pedestrian crossing standards to ensure they support safe and accessible movement for people of all abilities.
- Explore sidewalk and crosswalk standards and consider how existing standards or approaches could be adopted or adapted to improve accessibility across the City.
- Consider whether a higher standard is appropriate for busy pedestrian-oriented areas, such as downtown Courtenay.

6. Share accessibility information and highlight improvements where the City is exceeding minimum standards

- Identify examples where accessibility improvements go beyond minimum requirements, such as upgrades related to the 6th Street Bridge, the 5th Street and Cliffe Avenue intersection, and initiatives within the Safe and Active Schools Program.
- Consider options to share accessibility information such as accessible features in City parks and buildings, for example, on the City webpage or within online City maps.
- Create sign standards that communicate the accessibility rating and accessibility features of parks to park users.

17th street intersection with bike lane markings



Priorities & action items *con't*

Transportation

Vision: A transportation network that adapts to support safe, comfortable, and efficient travel for diverse mobility needs.

Objective: To improve the accessibility of the transportation network to better facilitate safe, comfortable, and efficient travel for diverse mobility needs.

1. Review snow-clearing practices

- Review Council policy on snow clearing and explore options with the Ministry for consistent snow-clearing across City and Ministry roads.
- Explore options to require residents and businesses to clear sidewalks fronting their properties.

2. Share information with the public about hedges or other vegetation blocking sidewalks

- Share information on maintaining private property to prevent vegetation from blocking sidewalks and how to submit a complaint.

3. Review accessible parking supply and maintenance

- Assess the number, location, and maintenance of accessible parking spaces across the City.
- Explore accessible parking standards and consider how existing standards or approaches could be adopted or adapted to improve accessibility consistency across the City.

4. Review accessibility requirements in planning documents

- Examine parking and accessibility requirements within the Zoning Bylaw, Official Community Plan, and development permit guidelines to ensure accessibility standards are consistent across City policies.

5. Advocate for accessible public transit

- Work with the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) to advocate for improvements to transit accessibility, based on community feedback and identified needs.

6. Improve accessibility at transit stops

- Explore opportunities to enhance transit stops with improved accessibility features and safety upgrades.
- Consider opportunities to incorporate improvements during redevelopment projects.

Priorities & action items *con't*

Service delivery

Vision: Municipal services that are respectful, inclusive, and convenient, and that adapt to the diverse needs of the community.

Objective: To adapt and enhance municipal service delivery so that programs and services are respectful, inclusive, and convenient for people of diverse abilities.



Adapted yoga class at the Lewis Centre

1. Develop an accessibility service guideline

- Create a short, plain-language guideline for staff on how to support residents and visitors with different access needs.
- Include practical examples such as offering assistance, allowing extra time, and providing flexible service options.
- Provide guidelines on hosting meetings and events with the public and communicating accessibility options.

2. Establish a process for reasonable accommodations

- Create a simple internal process for staff to log, review, and respond to accommodation requests related to City programs and services.
- Explore options to improve accessibility for recreation program registration.

3. Provide accessible customer service training.

- Offer short training sessions or e-learning modules for front-line and program staff.
- Topics may include disability awareness, respectful communication, inclusion, and responding to access requests.

4. Support sensory- and neurodivergent-friendly spaces and programs

- Review current practices and develop guidance or policy for providing sensory-friendly and neurodivergent-friendly spaces and recreation activities.
- Share information with neighbouring local governments to advocate for and support sensory-friendly and neurodivergent-friendly spaces and recreation activities.

Priorities & action items *con't*

Employment

Vision: *An inclusive and accessible workplace culture where employees of diverse abilities are recognized, valued, and supported to thrive.*

Objective: To foster an inclusive workplace culture and enhance employment practices so that staff of diverse abilities are recognized, valued, and supported to thrive.



Wheelchair lift at the Lewis Centre

1. Review recruitment materials for accessibility

- Assess job postings, application instructions, and career webpages to ensure they use plain language, invite accommodation requests, and are compatible with screen readers.

2. Include a standard accommodation statement in job postings

- Add a consistent statement indicating that applicants may request accommodations at any stage of the hiring process.
- Provide at least one clear way for applicants to request accommodations.
- Explore best practices and training opportunities for providing accommodations during recruitment processes and employment.

3. Improve onboarding materials

- Ensure onboarding documents and orientation sessions include information about accessibility, including how to request accommodations, who to contact, and the City's commitment to inclusion.

4. Track accessibility-related feedback from staff

- Use existing Human Resources or Health and Safety processes to monitor recurring accessibility concerns and identify opportunities for improvement.

5. Foster a workplace culture that has better understanding and support for diverse needs

- Explore Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility training options for staff.
- Consider options to support both service delivery and employment..

Priorities & action items *con't*

Communication

Vision: *Clear and accessible municipal communications that are easily understood by a diverse public.*

Objective: To enhance the clarity and accessibility of municipal communications so that information is easily understood by a diverse public.



Blind person using braille display and screen reader

1. Continue implementation of a plain language standard for public information

- Develop a short plain-language guideline for staff.
- Encourage its use in all public-facing materials, including web content, Council reports, public notices, and City publications, where possible.

2. Provide accessible formats for key documents upon request

- Identify priority documents such as tax notices, program guides, and key bylaw summaries.
- Consider options to provide accessible formats routinely or upon request (for example, large print or screen-reader-friendly PDFs).

3. Continue improving website accessibility

- Highlight ongoing upgrades to the City's website to support accessible navigation, readability, and compatibility with assistive technologies.

Priorities & action items *con't*

Housing (within municipal influence)

Vision: *A community where inclusive policies and planning tools support and expand the availability of accessible housing options.*

Objective: To utilize inclusive policies and planning tools to promote and expand the availability of accessible housing options throughout the community.



Nautsa ma'wt affordable housing for Elders and people with disabilities

1. Encourage accessible housing through planning tools

- Review zoning, development permit guidelines, and Official Community Plan (OCP) policies to identify opportunities to encourage or incentivize accessible and visitable housing.
- Examples may include adaptable units and barrier-free entrances in multi-unit developments.

2. Include accessibility considerations in development review

- Add basic accessibility considerations and universal design principles to staff development review checklists for housing projects.
- Examples may include step-free entrances, adequate corridor widths, and accessible parking located near building entrances.

3. Promote accessibility programs and funding opportunities

- Share information about provincial and federal programs that support accessible housing or accessible home modifications, such as retrofit grants, home renovation tax credits, or rent supplement programs.

