



City of Richmond

Report to Committee

To: General Purposes Committee

Date: August 15, 2019

From: Kim Somerville
Director, Community Social Development

File: 07-3190-01/CL Vol. 02

Martin Younis, B.Eng., M.Eng.
Acting Senior Manager, Capital Buildings
Project Development

Re: Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification Program

Staff Recommendation

That the staff report titled “Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification Program,” dated August 15, 2019 from the Director, Community Social Development and Acting Senior Manager, Capital Buildings Project Development, be received for information.

Kim Somerville
Director, Community Social Development
(604-276-4671)

Martin Younis, B.Eng., M.Eng.
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Att. 2

REPORT CONCURRENCE		
ROUTED TO:	CONCURRENCE	CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER
Recreation and Sport Services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Arts, Cultural and Heritage Services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Parks Services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
REVIEWED BY STAFF REPORT / AGENDA REVIEW SUBCOMMITTEE	INITIALS: 	APPROVED BY CAO

Staff Report

Origin

The purpose of this report is to provide City Council with an update on the Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification program, the status of City facilities certifications (28) and how the program relates to other current City accessibility initiatives.

This report supports Council's Strategic Plan 2018–2022 Strategy #4 – An Active and Thriving Community:

An active and thriving community characterized by diverse social and wellness programs, services and spaces that foster health and well-being for all.

Priority 4.2— Ensure infrastructure meets changing community needs, current trends and best practices.

This report supports the 2013–2022 Social Development Strategy's Strategic Direction #2 – Enhance Community Accessibility:

Action 3.5— Promote best practices in the assessment and upgrading of accessibility features in City and non-City facilities (e.g. continued participation with the Rick Hansen Foundation and others on the promotion and enhancement of the Planat online venue accessibility rating tool).

This report also supports Council Policy 4012 – Access and Inclusion (Attachment 1) that states:

Richmond is an accessible and inclusive city by:

4. Collaborating with senior levels of government, partner organizations and stakeholder groups to promote social and physical infrastructure to meet the diverse needs of people who visit, work and live in Richmond.

Analysis

City Accessibility Initiatives

The City has a long-standing practice of working with Richmond Centre for Disability (RCD) to enhance accessibility. On a quarterly basis, RCD representatives meet with City staff to identify and discuss areas where accessibility for various types of disability can be improved throughout the city, based on their lived experience. RCD representatives also provide input on accessibility features in the design of new recreation facilities and participate in pre-event site reviews at major City events. Site reviews utilize the City's Accessible Event Checklist (Attachment 2) as a standardized survey to ensure events are accessible and welcoming to all individuals.

To further expand access for all members of the community in City facilities, City Council adopted the Enhanced Accessibility Design Guidelines and Technical Specifications in 2018 to assist City staff and the development community in incorporating accessibility features in City-owned facilities that go beyond the BC Building Code requirements. The intent of the Design Guidelines is to promote enhanced accessibility and barrier-free access for all members of the community and to foster independence and mobility in all parts of the city.

RCD along with the Alzheimer's Society of BC, Barrier Free BC, Developmental Disabilities Association, Richmond Seniors Advisory Committee, Richmond Society for Community Living and Vancouver Coastal Health contributed to the development of the City's Enhanced Accessible Design Guidelines.

Awards

In 2017, the City's efforts to increase accessibility were nationally recognized by the Rick Hansen Foundation (RHF) when Richmond was one of three communities across Canada to receive the Rick Hansen Foundation Accessible Cities Award. The award recognized municipalities that are leaders in planning accessibility into their built environments and encouraging their communities to be more inclusive. In addition, the RHF also inducted the Richmond Olympic Oval into the Accessible Cities' Circle of Excellence as a "best in class" example of an accessible and inclusive community space.

The Rick Hansen Foundation

The City has been working with the RHF to improve physical accessibility in the City's built environment since 2013, when the RHF Planat rating system was first implemented. Planat was an online resource that provided information to the public about the physical accessibility of a venue. Since Planat ended in 2015, the City has continued to support RHF accessibility initiatives and was a pilot city in the development of the Rick Hansen Accessibility Certification (RHFAC) program.

The RHFAC program is a rating system that uses trained professionals to evaluate the accessibility of retail, commercial, institutional and multi-family residential buildings and sites. The RHFAC program considers the experience of people of all abilities; including those with mobility, vision and hearing disabilities. When assessing facilities, the RHFAC program evaluates the interior and exterior of the building, including parking, public spaces and staff areas. RHFAC assessments go beyond the BC building code requirements when rating a facility. Once an assessment is complete, a score card, recommendation report and letter of certification (if applicable) are provided to the facility operator.

A facility may be designated either RHF Accessibility Certified (rated 60–79 per cent) or RHF Accessibility Certified Gold (rated 80 per cent and over). Facilities with ratings below 60 per cent or facilities that do not have a public entrance and key functional spaces and amenities being physically accessible for everyone are not certified.

In 2018, RHF launched the RHFAC program with funding from the Provincial government to complete 1,100 free assessments throughout the province. Richmond was one of a number of municipalities, including Surrey, New Westminster, North Vancouver, Abbotsford and Kelowna, participating in the RHFAC program. The City was a leader in municipalities with 28 City of Richmond facilities assessed between May and December 2018 as part of this pilot program. Of the 28 City facilities assessed, 26 facilities have been RHF Accessibility Certified. Two facilities (South Arm and Steveston Outdoor Pools) are not certified.

Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification Program Evaluation

The RHFAC program continues to be refined after the first year of implementation. In City staff's review of the RHFAC score cards and recommendation reports submitted to date, some inconsistencies in how RHFAC Professionals have applied the rating system to evaluate facilities have been noted. Variances in the RHFAC recommendation reports by facility have also been identified. City and RHF staff are working together to further clarify RHFAC recommendations and support the continued development of the program. City and RHF staff are also meeting to discuss the technical requirements necessary to achieve RHF Accessibility Certified Gold, as the requirements for a facility to achieve gold status is currently not defined. As such, City staff are working through the RHFAC recommendations to best improve accessibility.

To date, there has been no cost to the City to participate in the RHFAC program as previous facility assessments were part of the RHFAC pilot program. However, if the City continues to assess City facilities through the program both the RHFAC Registry Application and Professional Rating fees would apply. Costs for the RHFAC Registry Application and Professional Rating fees range from \$2,250 - \$6,850 per facility, depending on the size and complexity of the facility. Certifications must be renewed every five years and the RHFAC Registry Application and Professional Rating fees would apply. Additionally, if any sites are reassessed during the five year certification period there would also be associated costs.

While RHFAC recommendation reports identify areas where accessibility can be improved in a facility, further assessment including drawings, plans and associated costs may also need to be prepared for facility improvements addressing RHFAC feedback. City staff are currently assessing the feasibility of recommended accessibility improvements to determine the cost/benefit as many older City facilities may require costly infrastructure upgrades to fulfill some of the recommendations.

The RHFAC program is a guide to furthering physical accessibility in the built environment as it identifies barriers to participation. City staff continue to evaluate RHFAC program recommendations to determine how they can best complement current City accessibility initiatives and most effectively contribute to furthering accessibility in the city.

Next Steps

To ensure the City continues to address accessibility in City facilities in a timely and cost effective manner, staff will take the following steps:

- Meet with RHF staff to review RHFAC recommendations and clarify any inconsistencies amongst the 28 sites assessed;
- Evaluate whether or not the RHFAC recommendations are in compliance with City bylaws, safety regulations and the City's Enhanced Accessible Design Guidelines;
- Prioritize recommendations considering health and safety concerns, the ability to address immediately in daily operations, timing and budgetary impact;
- Meet and discuss with City facility operators the RHFAC recommendations for each corresponding site;
- Explore accessibility recommendations for older buildings considering cost and structural implications;
- Determine which, if any, of the RHFAC recommendations for the 28 community facilities assessed should be addressed on a facility by facility case basis; and
- Develop an implementation plan to address accessibility recommendations with corresponding financial impact for Council's consideration.

Should RHFAC recommendations to improve accessibility be warranted, alternative sources of funding will be explored to support accessibility upgrades to City facilities through various funding streams, including grants.

The City has benefitted by participating in the RHFAC pilot program, which has identified areas where accessibility can be improved in City facilities. As the pilot program is now complete, City staff continue to work through the RHFAC recommendations and meet with RHF staff to better understand the scope of RHFAC's evaluation and to respond to the recommendations. The RHFAC program is a progressive national movement and involvement in the program assists the City in identifying barriers in the built environment. City staff continue to evaluate the RHFAC program assessments to determine what and if certain recommendations need to be addressed, sequencing and timing of addressing the recommendations, and how the recommendations further the City's commitment to improving accessibility and access to participation in facilities.

Financial Impact

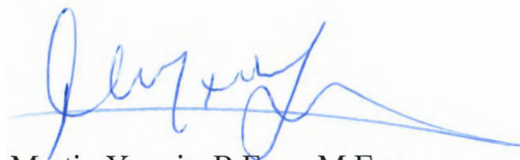
None.

Conclusion

In addition to working with RHF, the City continues to incorporate principles of accessible design in City buildings and open spaces to ensure that people of all ages and abilities feel welcome and are able to access City programs and services. Through participation in the RHFAC program, development of the City's Enhanced Accessibility Design Guidelines and work with RCD, the City continues to further accessibility in the city and as a result, improve the livability of Richmond.



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Att. 1: City of Richmond Access and Inclusion Policy

Att. 2: Accessible Events Checklist



Page 1 of 1	Access and Inclusion	Policy 4012
Adopted by Council: October 13, 1981 Amended by Council: December 8, 2014		

POLICY 4012:

It is Council policy that:

Richmond is an accessible and inclusive city by:

1. Acknowledging and keeping abreast of the accessibility and inclusiveness needs and challenges of diverse population groups in Richmond.
2. Ensuring that the Official Community Plan and other key City plans, strategies and policies incorporate measures to support Richmond's efforts to be an accessible and inclusive city.
3. Developing programs and adopting practices to ensure Richmond residents and visitors have access to a range of opportunities to participate in the economic, social, cultural and recreational life of the City.
4. Collaborating with senior levels of government, partner organization and stakeholder groups to promote social and physical infrastructure to meet the diverse needs of people who visit, work and live in Richmond.
5. Promoting barrier free access to the City's facilities, parks, programs and services.
6. Promoting a welcoming and respectful municipal workplace.
7. Providing information to the public in a manner that respects the diverse needs and characteristics of Richmond residents.

City of Richmond Accessible Events Checklist

The Accessible Events Checklist identifies the key areas to address when planning an event to ensure they are accessible for everyone to participate. By addressing each point on this form, event planners will ensure that all participants' accessibility needs have been taken into account.

	CHECKMARK
Pre-Event Publicity and Promotion	
All event publicity and promotion highlights the accessible features of the planned event.	
Entrances and Exits	
There is a designated entrance into the event that does not require attendees use stairs.	
Where there are stairs, there are railings to assist for support.	
There are unobstructed pathways both in and outside of the event venue, including curb cuts on the sidewalk and, if needed, curb ramps within the event site.	
Everyone, including persons in wheelchairs or mobility aids can enter the main entrance of the event (entrance greater than 36" or more recommended). If not, there is clear signage directing to an accessible entrance.	
Parking and Drop off	
There are designated accessible parking spaces close to the main entrance or alternate accessible entrance- including wider spots suitable for side loading vehicles.	
If no parking is provided, there are alternate accessible transportation arrangements.	
There is a suitable Handydart and taxi drop off and/or pick up area at the event.	
Washrooms	
There are accessible routes to washrooms.	
A minimum of 10% of all washrooms at the event are accessible.	
There are signs and site maps directing people to accessible washrooms.	

On Site	
Site maps that indicate accessibility features are available to staff, volunteers and the general public.	
Appropriate staff and volunteers on site are fully aware of event accessibility features and trained to meet the needs of members of the public living with physical disabilities.	
All ramps used on site are non-slip.	
The height of the tables for writing surfaces, registration, food, beverages etc., will accommodate people in wheelchairs (minimum 29" knee clearance).	
There are wheelchair ramps to stage areas, if needed.	
If a person with a disability is presenting or performing, they can operate and adjust microphones, lecterns, or the position of the surface on which their computer or equipment rests.	
There is adequate and appropriate signage on site to meet the needs of people with disabilities.	
There is adequate scooter storage at the event (if needed).	
There are accessible back stage areas, e.g.: greens rooms, changing areas, hospitality areas (if needed).	
Consider providing an accessible, integrated and unobstructed event viewing area, which will allow wheelchair users and others living with physical disabilities to fully participate.	
Safety	
All electrical cables and/or cords that cross any paths covered. The lips/edges of covers should be no more than 1/2" thick to prevent tripping and allow any mobility devices to traverse over them.	
Emergency exits and refuge areas are accessible and emergency plans incorporate the needs of those with disabilities.	
Exhibits and Activations	
All pathways and vendors are well lit to ensure safety of all attending, including seniors, young children, and persons who use mobility aids.	
Routes to vendors and booths are accessible and unobstructed.	
Vendors can assist persons in wheelchairs or mobility aids over the counter (at least a portion of the counter should be a maximum of 36" to allow service to person in a wheelchair or mobility aid).	

NOTE: This checklist is designed as a starting point when planning an accessible event. You are still required to comply with all City, Federal, and Provincial Disability Access Requirements where applicable.