

Richmond Accessibility Advisory Committee 2024 Annual Report

Introduction

The Richmond Accessibility Advisory Committee (RAAC) was established in 2023. The RAAC acts as a resource and provides advice to Council to support the advancement of accessibility in the city, so that people with disabilities are able to participate fully in all aspects of community life. Through ongoing discussion, information and knowledge sharing, the RAAC assists the City with identifying barriers in the community experienced by people with disabilities and advises the City on how to prevent and remove these barriers, thereby aligning the Committee's work with related requirements of the Accessible British Columbia Act. To support the alignment of the City's and Library's efforts to advance accessibility in Richmond, a representative from Richmond Public Library participates as a member of the RAAC.

2024 Membership

In 2024, the RAAC was comprised of up to 12 Council-appointed voting members, consisting of seven citizen representatives and five organization representatives, representing Richmond Public Library, Aspire Richmond, Pathways Clubhouse, Richmond Centre for Disability and Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH). The RAAC had a full contingent of 12 voting members in 2024.

Citizen Appointees

- Rob Sleath, Chair
- Shaan Lail, Vice-Chair
- Damian Gorman, Citizen Member
- Melanie Arnis, Citizen Member
- Pam Andrews, Citizen Member
- Tommy Leung, Citizen Member
- Richard Marion, Indigenous Representative, Citizen Member

Organizational Representatives

- Anne Bechard, Richmond Public Library
- Cindy Larden, Vancouver Coastal Health
- Dave MacDonald, Pathways Clubhouse
- Ella Huang, Richmond Centre for Disability
- Sue Jones, Aspire Richmond

The RAAC also included three non-voting City of Richmond representatives:

- Councillor Bill McNulty, Council Liaison
- Melanie Burner, Program Manager, Social Development, Staff Liaison
- Amanda McCulley, Planner 2, Accessibility, Staff Support

2024 Highlights

The RAAC held 10 meetings in 2024, with no meetings scheduled in August or December. The RAAC discussed a wide variety of issues and barriers affecting people with disabilities in the community and provided advice and recommendations to the City to support the advancement of a number of accessibility-related initiatives. The RAAC served as both an advisory committee and as a forum for information sharing between the City, Library, Province and local non-profit organizations. Highlights of the RAAC's 2024 meetings included:

1) Applying an accessibility lens to City initiatives

The RAAC provided an accessibility perspective to support a number of new City strategies and initiatives in 2024, including the Steveston Streetscape Vision, the Terra Nova Rural Park Historical Assets Program Plan and the Draft Wayfinding Strategy.

2) Information sharing with other organizations

In 2024, there were multiple opportunities for the RAAC to learn from other organizations and advocates, including the Assistant Deputy Minister for the Provincial Accessibility Directorate, staff from Pathways Clubhouse, and students from the MacNeill Secondary School Chapter of Inspired 2 Uplift, a non-profit organization with various chapters that raise awareness about accessibility.

3) Learning about existing City and Library projects

The RAAC learned about existing projects, including how the Enhanced Accessibility Design Guidelines and Technical Specifications are incorporated into facility development and the Library's sensory-friendly initiatives.

Presentations

The RAAC hosted monthly guest speakers to highlight new City strategies and initiatives and provide opportunities for feedback to advance accessibility across City planning and operations.

• January – Committee Orientation

Melanie Burner (Program Manager, Social Development, City of Richmond) led a committee orientation and presented an overview of the RAAC mandate, terms of reference and member roles and responsibilities.

• February – Steveston Streetscape Vision

Transportation staff presented on the Steveston Streetscape Vision that aims to define a long-term transportation strategy for a safe and enjoyable Steveston. Staff sought general feedback to support the development of an initial concept for the streetscape design.

- **March – Standards and the Accessible British Columbia Act**

Sam Turcott (Assistant Deputy Minister for the Provincial Accessibility Directorate) presented on the development of the first two accessibility standards that will be introduced through the Accessible British Columbia Act. Discussion ensued and committee members posed a number of questions related to the development and implementation of the new standards as well as provincial accessibility programs and services.

- **April – Inspired 2 Uplift**

Students from the MacNeill Secondary School Chapter of Inspired 2 Uplift presented on their buddy program and various fundraising events that support fellow students with disabilities.

- **May – Sensory Safe(r) at Richmond Public Library, National AccessAbility Week Awareness Initiative, 2024 Terra Nova Rural Park Historical Assets Program Plan**

Ginny Dunnill (Librarian 1, Richmond Public Library) introduced three initiatives offered through a partnership between Richmond Public Library and Aspire Richmond. Sarah Erceg (Social Planning Analyst, City of Richmond) presented on activities aimed to increase staff capacity to identify, prevent and remove barriers during National Accessibility Week (May 26 – June 1, 2024).

Alex Kurnicki (Manager, Parks Programs, City of Richmond) and Maria Stanborough (Principal Consultant, C+S Planning Group) presented on the 2024 Terra Nova Rural Park Historical Assets Program Plan which aims to maximize the Heritage Precinct, historical landscapes and other assets within Terra Nova Rural Park.

- **June – Pathways Clubhouse**

Mike Tibbles (Program Manager, Employment, Pathways Clubhouse) presented on his personal journey with a mental health disability, the impact of accessible mental health services and the role of municipal government in fostering an inclusive community.

- **July – Aspire Richmond**

Mark Downey (Aspire Richmond) and Sue Jones (Director, Respite Services and Quality Assurance, Aspire Richmond) discussed the 2023–2024 Aspire Richmond Accessibility Report and Plan.

- **September – City Facilities**

Martin Younis (Director, Facilities & Project Development, City of Richmond) and Mile Racic (Manager, Capital Buildings Project Development, City of Richmond) presented information on the City’s approach to incorporating accessibility enhancements into the development and retrofitting of City facilities.

- **October – Tactile Walking Surface Indicators for Transit Stops**

Dr. Beezy Bentzen (Director of Research, Accessible Design for the Blind LLC) presented her research on the use of Tactile Walking Surface Indicators in the United States, with a focus on the user experience.

- **November – Wayfinding Strategy**

Sherry Baumgardner (Tourism Development Liaison, City of Richmond) presented on the City’s forthcoming Wayfinding Strategy for accessibility input.

During each meeting held in 2024, the RAAC designated time to discuss barriers they, or individuals they support, have identified in the community, as well as potential ways to remove and prevent these barriers. Areas of concern identified by the committee were forwarded to the appropriate City departments for resolution.

Conclusion and Acknowledgements

Throughout 2024, the Committee has been honoured to represent the diversity of people with disabilities in Richmond and remains committed to supporting the City in meeting the legislative requirements of the Accessible British Columbia Act. We would like to thank City Council for their support of the RAAC. As well, we express our gratitude to City staff for addressing the RAAC’s feedback on accessibility barriers in the community. We look forward to continuing to make Richmond more accessible and inclusive through our work in 2025.

Submitted by:

Rob Sleath, Chair
Richmond Accessibility Advisory Committee