



Message from the AAC

We are proud to endorse the City of Victoria's Guide on Compliance to the Accessible B.C. Act (Guide). This Guide is a companion to the 2020 Accessibility Framework and was developed through the leadership of the City's Accessibility Advisory Committee, City staff and community partners. Embracing the principle of "Nothing About Us Without Us," the vision advanced by this Guide will continue to strengthen the inclusion of community voices and lived experiences of disability into the City's plans, policies, programs, projects and the built environment. Through our collective efforts as a committee and community, the Guide reaffirms the importance of meaningful access, universal design, equity and evidence-based practices.

"Nothing About Us Without Us" is more than a guiding principle; it is a lived reality for those of us who live and breathe accessibility every day. Our committee helps the City understand the nuances of accessibility, ensuring that meaningful access, equity, universal design and other accessibility best practices are at the forefront of our initiatives and City decision-making. We invite everyone to try walking a day in our shoes to truly appreciate the importance of these efforts.

Building awareness and trust within our community and among each other has been paramount. We appreciate that the City is now more involved with incorporating lived experiences from the beginning and throughout the development of strategies. We must continue to be a leader in accessibility in B.C.

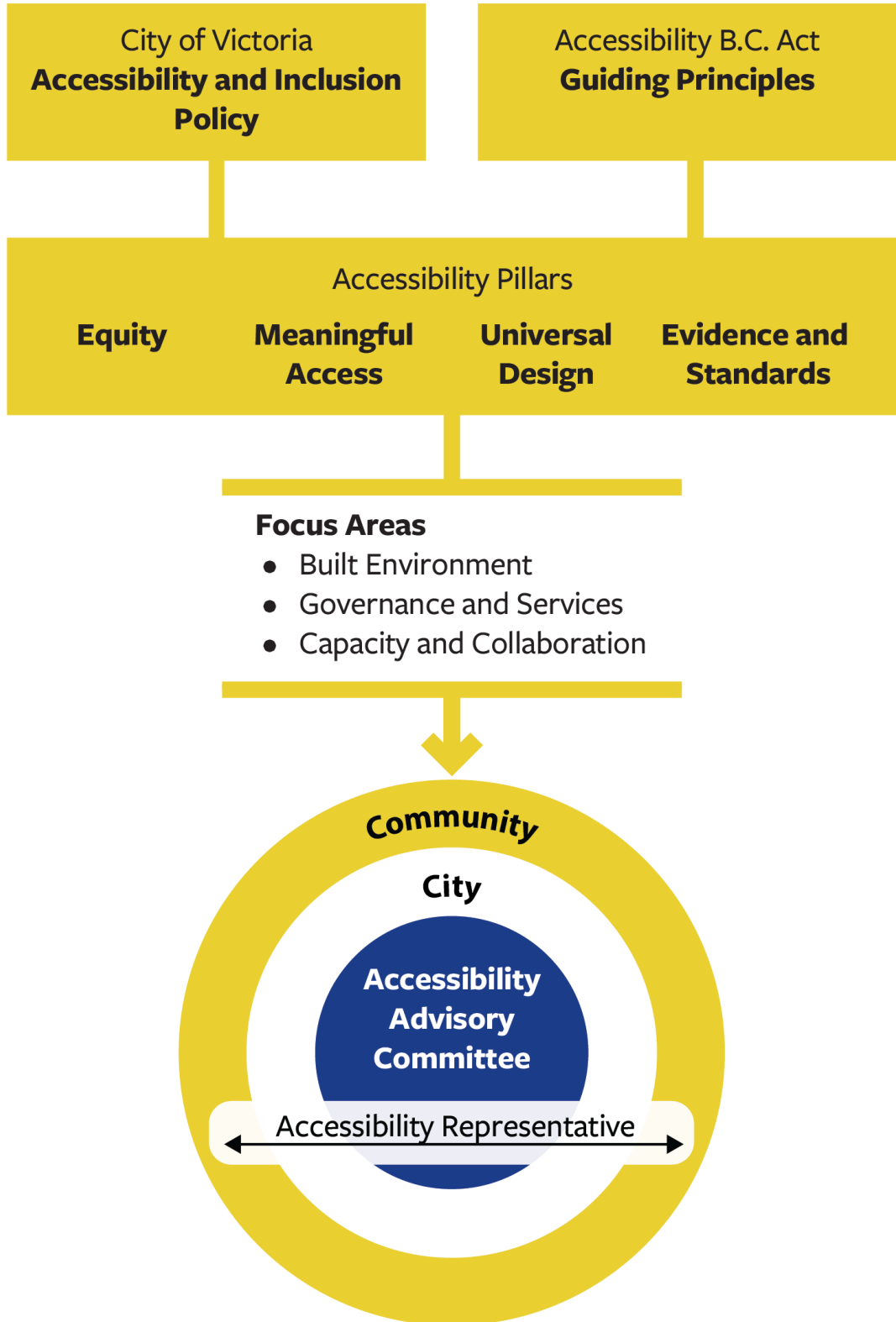
Accessibility is about broadening perspectives and recognizing the intersectionality of our work. Just as a good photographer uses multiple lenses, our approach to accessibility encompasses a wide range of experiences and needs. What was once symbolized solely by a wheelchair icon, now represents a broader, more inclusive understanding of access, including income, access to programs and more.

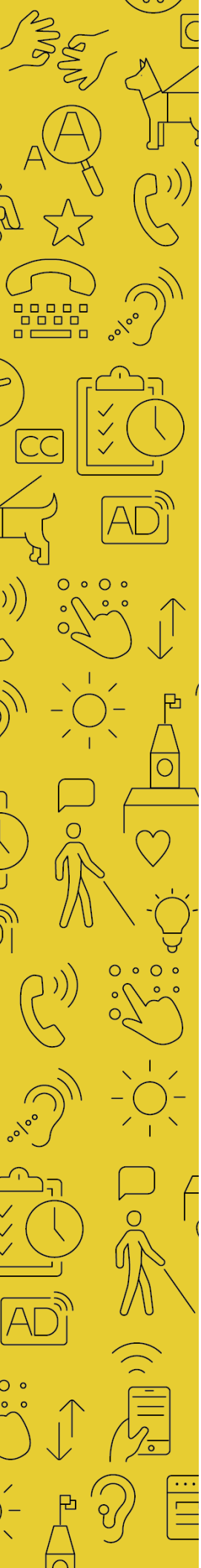
Our ultimate goal, in collaboration with the community and the City, is to prevent barriers altogether. By including various disability perspectives, we help build a more inclusive, accessible and welcoming city for all.

Thank you to everyone in the community, the committee and the City who contributed to this very important work. Your efforts are invaluable in making Victoria a city that truly embraces and embodies accessibility for all.

City of Victoria
Accessibility Advisory Committee

Nothing About Us Without Us





Diversity

Every person is unique. People with disabilities are individuals with varied backgrounds. Characteristics such as race, gender, sexual orientation, religion and lived experiences shape how people experience the world.

This Guide acknowledges the role of intersectionality in creating unique experiences of disability and commits to seeking diverse voices and partnerships to reach decisions that address a diversity of accessibility needs.

Collaboration

Promoting accessible communities is a shared responsibility and everyone has a role to play.

This Guide emphasizes the importance of the City of Victoria collaborating with other levels of government in addition to working in partnership with community organizations, people with lived experience and other stakeholders to address and remove barriers to accessibility.

Self-Determination

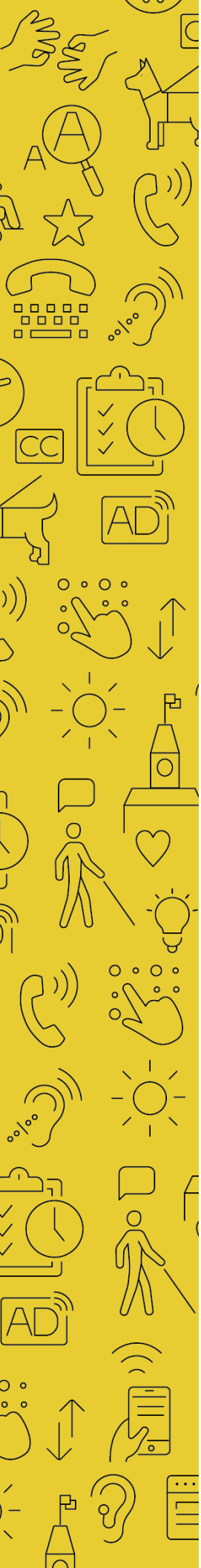
Accessibility legislation should seek to empower people with disabilities to make their own choices and pursue the lives they wish to live.

This Guide recognizes people with lived experiences of disability as subject experts and commits to including them and their perspectives in decision-making processes.

Universal Design

Accessible communities are created when services and environments are designed to be usable by people with a wide range of abilities and needs.

This Guide embeds universal design and principles of meaningful access in its approach to accessibility.



Defining Accessibility

Accessibility is the level of ease that something like an object, service or place, can be used and enjoyed by people with disabilities.

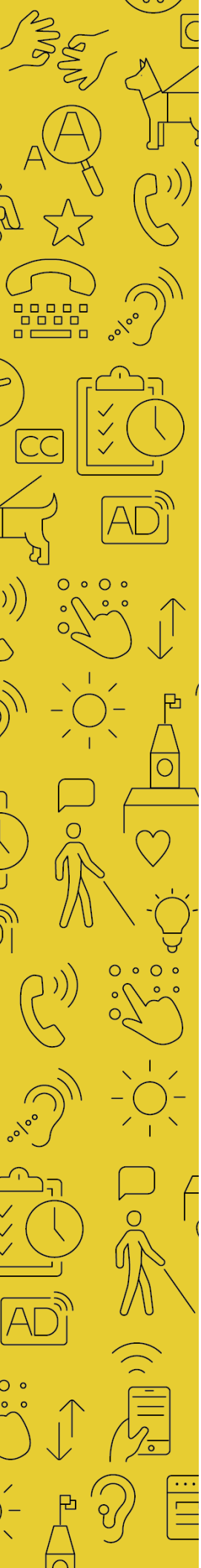
Accessibility is about removing barriers and increasing inclusion and independence so that people with disabilities can take part in their communities through work, play and other daily activities.

Defining Barriers

Barriers to accessibility are anything that prevent people with disabilities from fully and equally participating in our community. Barriers can take many forms, including:

Attitudinal barriers	When people think and act based upon false ideas
Physical barriers	When obstacles make access difficult
Information or Communication barriers	When communication methods do not reach people with disabilities
Systemic barriers	When an organization's policies or procedures are not inclusive
Technological barriers	When technology cannot be accessed by people with disabilities
Sensory barriers	When lights, sounds or smells prevent participation in the environment

Our understanding of barriers evolves over time as insight is learned from people with disabilities. Future accessibility planning will likely consider additional barriers from those currently identified.



The following pages share details on how these pillars integrate with City priorities and other concepts, and can be used as a framework to advance accessibility work.

Pillar 1: Equity and Accessibility

Accessibility is an integral component of increasing equity in our communities. The City of Victoria equity policy calls for embedding accessibility across all spaces, policies, program and services. Equity is about identifying and removing barriers for all members of our community.

Intersectionality

People with disabilities may experience multiple, overlapping forms of discrimination based on aspects of their identity such as race, gender, sexuality, income and immigration status. These layers of identity shape how individuals interact with City systems, policies, programs and spaces — sometimes creating added barriers to accessibility.

Collaborating with people with disabilities is essential to learning from their lived experience and expertise. This understanding helps us identify the unique challenges individuals face, so we can work together to remove barriers and build a more accessible and equitable city.

The City's Equity Framework sets out four principles with corresponding commitments that guide our work on accessibility and equity:

Relationship Building

We are committed to understanding the intersectionality and diversity of people's identities, lived experiences, forms of disability (visible and invisible) and to building relationships with them.

Capacity Development

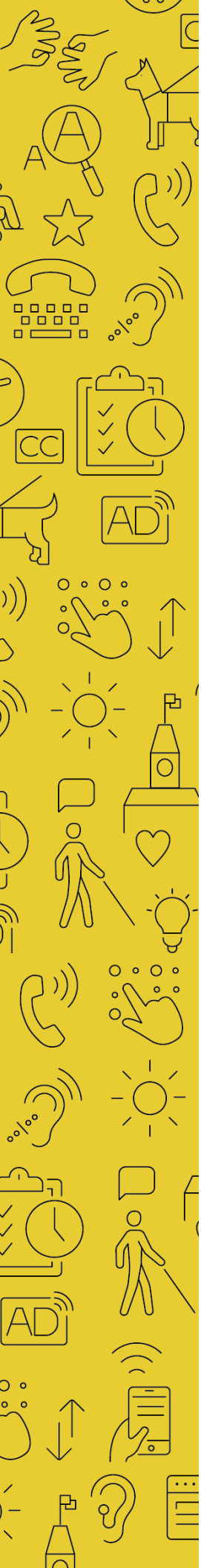
We are committed to developing our own knowledge of accessibility and disability and our skills to advance accessibility within spaces, policies, programs and services.

Evidence-based Decision Making

We are committed to applying quantitative and qualitative data and engaging with people with lived and living experiences to inform accessibility related decisions.

Dismantling Systemic Barriers

We are committed to identifying and removing accessibility barriers in current spaces, policies, programs and services.



Pillar 3: Universal Design

A key approach for removing barriers to accessibility is universal design.

The principles of universal design can be used to evaluate existing designs, guide the design process and educate stakeholders about characteristics of more usable services, products and environments.

The Seven Principles of Universal Design

Universal design principles can be applied to a variety of situations in the municipal context — including, community recreation or arts programs, services at City Hall, public consultation activities or new infrastructure designs. Applying these principles in the development and ongoing management of City services will improve accessibility across our city:

1. **Equitable Use:** The design is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities.
2. **Flexibility in Use:** The design considers a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.
3. **Simple and Intuitive Use:** Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language skills or current concentration level.
4. **Perceptible Information:** The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities.
5. **Tolerance for Error:** The design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.
6. **Low Physical Effort:** The design can be used efficiently and comfortably with minimum fatigue.
7. **Size and Space for Approach and Use:** Appropriate size and space is provided for approach, reach, manipulation and use regardless of user's body size, posture or mobility.



Pillar 4: Evidence and Standards

Evidence and standards provide guidance for innovative and effective ways to embed accessibility.

Applying an **evidence-based process** refers to making decisions about a program, practice or policy based on research that is informed by facts and lived experiences.

Accessibility standards are guides and resources that have been created by disability experts, including people with lived experiences and leading community organizations who research and test ways to improve accessibility.

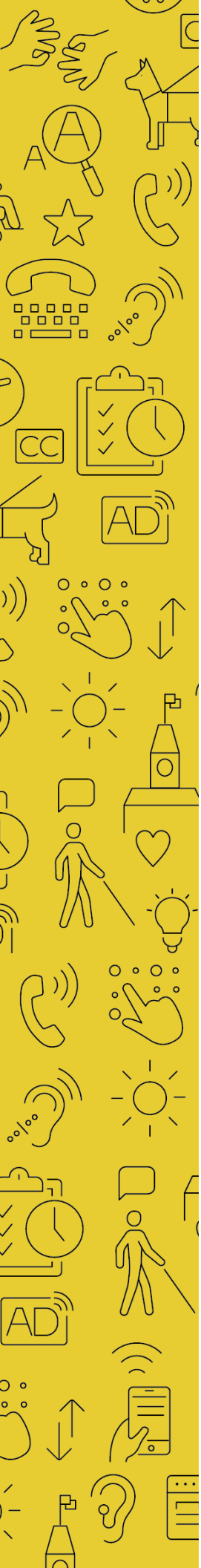
Standards for accessibility offer specific guidance on how to improve the design of objects and spaces people use or interact with regularly. As our society changes and we adapt to new technologies or systems, standards also adapt and change. An evidence-based approach requires ongoing learning to follow the most up-to-date best practices, standards and guidelines.

Using best practices designed by people with lived and living experience of disability is always preferred.

Two key resources are commonly used to design more accessible communities in Canada: the latest version of CSA B651 and the Rick Hansen Foundation rating system. The City continues to integrate these standards and approaches within City undertakings related to the built environment.

[CSA B651:23: Accessible Design for the Built Environment](#) is a technical standard that sets accessibility requirements for buildings and facilities in the built environment considering a range of user needs (a separate standard, [CSA B652:23](#) provides guidance on the creation of accessible dwellings). The CSA standards are a National Standard of Canada as they can be used in place of the design standards for buildings in the National Building Code and are widely accepted as a best practice. The B.C. Building Code was updated in 2024 to include key accessibility considerations and align with the CSA standards.

[The Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification](#) rating system is rooted in principles of universal design and is commonly used by municipalities and organizations across Canada to measure compliance with the CSA standards and to develop a comprehensive understanding of a site's level of meaningful access.



Focus Area 1: Built Environment

Goal

- To ensure people with disabilities can access spaces in the built environment created for the benefit of residents and that these spaces are designed to support their needs.
- To systematically remove and prevent accessibility barriers in:
 - Buildings and facilities
 - Mobility and transportation
 - Planning and development
 - Parks, open spaces and public plazas
 - Emergency management

How

Creating accessible built environments and infrastructure for people of all abilities includes incorporating universal design principles in public and private facilities, housing, roads, transportation and movement networks, plazas, parks and other gathering areas. An accessible built environment creates opportunities for social connection, engagement and wellbeing.

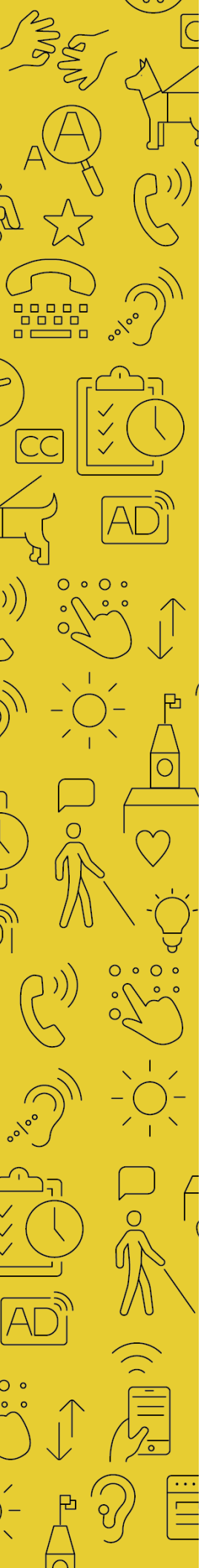
The City is committed to continuing to develop and apply accessible and universal design standards that align with industry and other municipal best practices, especially those associated with the CSA and Rick Hansen Foundation guidelines.

Buildings and Facilities

The City operates more than 100 buildings including public offices, recreation centres and major event venues including the Save-On-Foods Memorial Arena, Royal Athletic Park and the Victoria Conference Centre. In addition, the City maintains buildings that support other municipal services such as park operations, public works, fire and rescue and police operations. Meaningful access ensures a user's whole journey is considered, including the route from a building's exterior through to its interior and ensures all needs are anticipated and met.

Mobility and Transportation

Accessible mobility relates to the ease of moving from one location to another. Planning for transportation accessibility involves considering safety (such as paths of travel for walking, wheeling and other modes of transportation) and decisions related to roadways, land use and developments which reduce the barriers and effort required to access critical destinations and services.



Planning and Development

A key area of the City's work is in planning for its future. Policies and regulations such as the Official Community Plan, the Zoning Bylaw, housing policies and strategies and transportation plans shape how our community is built. Applying accessibility standards and best practices to planning processes and strategies can help the City advance improvements on accessibility, support public education and encourage private sector involvement in creating accessible environments.

Parks, Open Spaces and Public Plazas

The City of Victoria's parks, plazas and open spaces are a vital piece of the City's character, culture and vibrancy. Serving residents and visitors alike, they offer important opportunities for socializing, recreation, relaxation, play, learning and community connection. Engaging people with lived experiences in planning phases ensures these spaces contribute to quality of life for people of all ages and abilities.

Emergency Management

Accessibility is crucial in City and resident preparedness for major emergencies and climate change-related events, including fires, floods, earthquakes, tsunamis and extreme weather. The design of the built environment should anticipate these events and embed accessibility requirements and features within emergency exits, areas of refuge, alarm systems and equipment, as well as evacuation instructions.

Key Objectives

1. To prevent and remove barriers from City infrastructure, buildings and facilities, including transportation, parks and open spaces using principles of universal design and adaptability.
2. To evaluate and prioritize retrofits to existing City infrastructure, buildings and spaces to meet the latest version of the B.C. Building Code and current accessibility standards and best practices, including the Province of B.C., Canadian Standards Association and the Rick Hansen Foundation.
3. To apply best practices and draw on the knowledge of people with lived experience of disability in planning, designing and maintaining public infrastructure in the built environment.



Focus Area 2: Governance and Services

Goal

- To ensure opportunities for meaningful participation in, and equitable access to, the City's offerings including public decision-making and engagement processes, programs, services and information.
- To support continuous improvement of public participation including in programs, services and information systems.

How

Supporting the City's efforts toward accessibility and equity involves removing barriers that prevent participation in governance systems and public life.

Participation is important for individual wellbeing but is also important to help the City arrive at decisions that are informed by a diversity of voices.

Improving our governance systems means ensuring people with disabilities can engage in matters that affect their own lives and communities. This involvement may include participating in public affairs (such as serving on advisory committees, voting and being elected) and being able to access City services and civic employment opportunities.

Removing barriers to City services requires examining how we engage with the public, design and fund programs and services, and develop and share information. This work can involve:

- Providing accessible information and technology services.
- Offering adaptive equipment at recreation facilities.
- Requiring accessibility plans when planning and issuing permits for special events.
- Supporting knowledgeable customer service interactions.
- Using feedback processes to support ongoing improvement and responsiveness to peoples' needs.

Participation and Decision-Making

Participation and decision-making in civic processes takes many forms, from engaging in policy development, attending public meetings and taking part in advisory committees, to running for election, voting and providing feedback on City operations. Ensuring people with disabilities are represented and can meaningfully participate in these and other civic areas requires resources and collaboration at all levels (Council, Advisory Committees, administration, staff and community).

A vertical yellow bar on the left side of the page contains various white line-art icons related to accessibility and communication. These include hands, a dog, a magnifying glass over the letter 'A', a telephone, a star, a calendar, a speech bubble, a person with a cane, a lightbulb, a hand with a speech bubble, a person with a cane, a smartphone, and a question mark.

Focus Area 3: Capacity and Collaboration

Goal

- To lead accessibility changemaking within the City and promote collaborative, positive attitudes in our community, civic processes and engagement opportunities.
- To build awareness of the diversity of peoples' abilities, and the types of barriers people with disabilities, both visible and non-visible, face.
- To develop relationships that enable stakeholders to collaborate on widespread accessibility improvements.
- To generate an understanding of existing accessibility gaps and work toward providing resources and financial opportunities to address them, where appropriate.

How

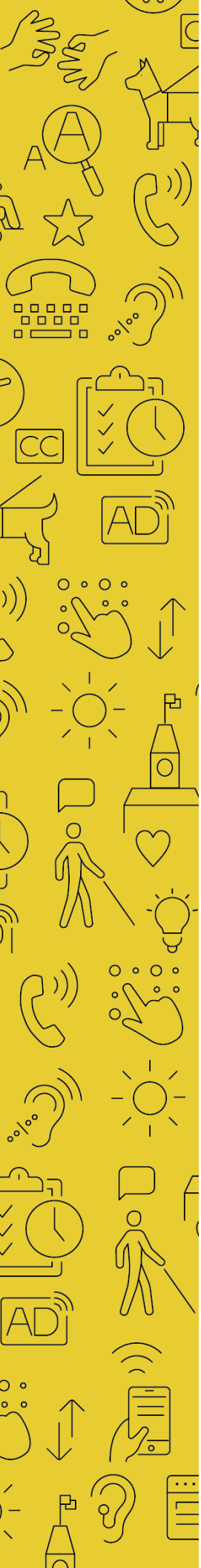
Building organizational and community capacity and networks of collaborators can support a high standard of accessibility across the community. Through its leadership position, the City can implement organizational improvements, provide and connect others to resources and collaborate with community partners and other levels of government to make widespread changes.

Part of embedding accessibility into practice involves changing community attitudes toward disability and growing understanding of the types of barriers people with different abilities face. The City can support attitudinal change by:

- Integrating accessibility into core business practices.
- Implementing policies to improve workplace culture.
- Demonstrating inclusion in community events, programs and civic processes.
- Investing in building strong community relationships.

Awareness and Understanding

Misunderstandings and stigma associated with disability continue to impact the wellbeing of people with diverse abilities. The City acknowledges the need to challenge these attitudes by demonstrating leadership as an organization and taking deliberate actions within the workplace to support cultural change. This work will be informed by upcoming provincial service and employment standards and may include staff training to build a foundational understanding of the diverse experiences of people with disabilities.



Resourcing and Access to Supports

To build capacity for accessibility improvements, it is important to connect change makers — such as individuals, organizations, City staff, advisory committees, partners and others — with resources. In its role as service provider, the City can access and administer funding and resources that support others in making accessibility improvements. Resources can look like grant funding, guidelines, tools, training opportunities and other forms of investment.

The City can also improve processes that help stakeholders access resources and supports. These include procurement policies (of both contractors and materials), partnership agreements, as well as regulations that provide direction for development, use of public space and other activities that the City contracts out or permits.

Partnerships and Community Capacity

Supporting deep, lasting change cannot be achieved by working alone — everyone has a role to play. The City takes a collective impact approach to extending the scale of accessibility improvement by collaborating across departments and with a diverse range of stakeholders and other orders of government. Regular external partners include advisory committees, community organizations, residents (especially those with lived experience), businesses and accessibility service providers.

Partnerships build capacity for change by connecting people to best practices, tools, lived-experience experts, industry leaders, funding, training and other supports. Building relationships of knowledgeable, capable, individuals improves decision-making, strengthens accessibility efforts, supports consistent approaches, addresses information gaps and ultimately advances shared accessibility priorities. The City is committed to building internal and external relationships to ensure accessibility is embedded into all aspects of the organization's work and influence.

Key Objectives

1. To contribute to a welcoming, inclusive, environment for people with disabilities.
2. To demonstrate inclusivity in all City-led or supported events through planning, engagement and reporting.
3. To continue strengthening and building relationships to improve understanding of accessibility barriers and ability to leverage networks to achieve widespread accessibility improvements.

