

City of Coquitlam Accessibility and Inclusion Plan

Plain Language Version | 2026 to 2029

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Helpful Terms for this Plan

Accessibility – making sure all people can take part in daily activities that matter to them. This includes:

- Getting into buildings and public spaces.
- Using services and programs.
- Understanding important information.
- Moving around the community.

Advisory Committee – a group of community members and organizations that give advice and feedback to City staff. The Accessibility and Inclusion Advisory Committee is a group that gave feedback to this Plan.

Assistive devices – digital or physical tools that help people do daily tasks. Examples include screen readers, canes, wheelchairs, hearing aids, and speech to text programs.

Barrier – things that prevent people from participating fully in society or doing tasks in their daily life. Barriers can be:

- Physical objects that make it challenging to do a task or get somewhere, like buildings that do not have ramps or elevators.
- Communication methods, or the way that information is shared, received, or understood. These are things like noisy environments or documents that cannot be used by screen readers.
- Attitudes like the way people think about or treat others.
- Guidelines or rules that make it hard to participate in things by accident

Built Environment – physical parts of the world that exist around us. Examples include buildings, sidewalks, parks, play spaces, and others.

Disability – something that limits a person from taking part in normal and routine activities. Disabilities can be:

- Visible, like using a walker.
- Invisible, like mental health challenges or chronic pain.
- Permanent, like something you are born with.
- Short-term, like a broken arm or bad illness.
- Caused by injury, like a spinal cord injury.
- Caused by ageing, like vision or hearing loss related to age.

Inclusion – when people have what they need to feel welcome and part of community life. Inclusion means different things for people with different backgrounds, abilities, and life experiences.

Procurement – how City staff buy things or work with others. Examples include buying equipment or hiring specialists.

Universal Design - design that works for everyone. Examples include wide doorways, ramps, and signs with pictures and raised text.

Note of Thanks

Thank you to everyone who shared their time and personal experiences with us to help create this plan.

Many people who live and work in Coquitlam shared their knowledge with us to help write this plan. These stories and advice were very important. They helped us learn about what is important to change and the best ways for the City to get better with accessibility and inclusion.

City staff give special thanks to the Accessibility and Inclusion Advisory Committee. The committee plays an important role in making the City more accessible and inclusive.

Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge with gratitude and respect that the name Coquitlam was derived from the hə́ŋqəmiṇəm (HUN-kuh-MEE-num) word kwikwə́ləm (kwee-KWET-lum) meaning “Red FishUp the River”. The City is honoured to be located on the kwikwə́ləm traditional and ancestrallands, including those parts that were historically shared with the q̓ ícəy̓ (kat-zee), and other Coast Salish Peoples.

About This Plan

This is the Plain Language version of the City of Coquitlam Accessibility and Inclusion Plan. This Plan is made to be clear and accessible for readers. Some features of this Plain Language version are:

- No pictures and a simple design.
- A focus on key ideas and shortened text.
- Formatting that works with assistive devices.
- A list of common terms and definitions.

The City of Coquitlam Accessibility and Inclusion Plan has four parts:

- **Part 1: Why We Made This Plan** – explains the City’s focus on accessibility and inclusion.
- **Part 2: How We Made This Plan** – shares who staff talked to and what we learned.
- **Part 3: The Plan** – lists the actions the City plans to take.
- **Part 4: What We Do Next and How You Can Help** – shares how City staff will use and update this Plan, and how the public can give feedback.

Section 1: Why We Made This Plan

We made this plan to meet the needs of our community.

The City of Coquitlam is growing fast. We know that as we grow, our city has more people with different needs and abilities.

We know accessibility is becoming more important because:

- One in four people in British Columbia have a disability. This means as many as 43,000 people in Coquitlam may have a disability.
- Our community is getting older. Accessibility needs are more common when people age.
- Barriers also come from areas other than disability. Accessibility barriers can come with age, gender, language, and other backgrounds and identities.

We made this plan to share what we are doing and planning.

The City of Coquitlam has been working to make our city more accessible for a long time. We have been doing things like:

- Working with accessibility groups to help us make better decisions.
- Training staff to understand challenges and help residents.
- Making more of our recreation programs and buildings accessible.
- Making it easier for people to get around our streets, parks, and trails.
- Making it easier for people to come to our events.
- Putting a translation option on our website with over 60 languages.

We made this plan to meet a provincial law.

The government of British Columbia requires the City of Coquitlam, and other cities, to:

- Have an accessibility plan.
- Have a way for people to share feedback.
- Have an accessibility committee.

We made this plan to be smart about how we spend our time and efforts.

There are many ways to make accessibility and inclusion better. People shared with us that some things are more important to do first. This Plan helps us know where to focus and when to spend our efforts to get work done.

This Plan works together with the City's Strategic Plan to make important change.

Section 2: How We Made This Plan

We followed provincial guidance.

The government of British Columbia shared topics for future accessibility laws. The 6 main topics of this Plan come from these areas. They are:

1. Built Environment

2. Delivery of Services
3. Employment
4. Information and Communications
5. Procurement of Goods and Services
6. Transportation

The law also requires accessibility plans to think about inclusion and other ideas. We focus this Plan on both accessibility **and** inclusion.

We learned from community members and experts.

City staff started work on this Plan in 2024. We talked and listened to many people, organizations, and committees.

It is important that people who face accessibility and inclusion barriers helped make this Plan. It is also important that they help update it in the future. This involvement helps our Plan think about different experiences of people who live in our community and work with us.

People with different abilities and backgrounds are experts in the barriers they face. We recognize this expertise by listening directly to them. We heard from:

- Community members through a public survey.
- Service providers and community members who came to workshops.
- Advisory committee members from the Accessibility and Inclusion Committee, Multiculturalism Advisory Committee, and Sports and Recreation Advisory Committee.
- Youth from the Coquitlam Youth Council and a local school program.
- Staff from all departments of the City.

We heard feedback on what is working well and ideas to do better. We used this feedback to make actions for this Plan.

Section 3: What this Plan Includes

This Plan is trying to make accessibility and inclusion better for residents and visitors. A more accessible Coquitlam will help people with different abilities and backgrounds feel welcome and take part in City life. The Plan works to meet this goal by:

- Focusing on both accessibility **and** inclusion.
- Sharing ways to get rid of barriers in City spaces.
- Asking for feedback from community members on ways to keep improving.

This Plan has 6 focus areas. Each area includes a goal, actions, and examples of what change could look like.

The 6 Focus Areas

1. Built Environment
2. Delivery of Services

3. Employment
4. Information and Communications
5. Procurement of Goods and Services
6. Transportation

Focus Area 1 – Built Environment

Goal: Make spaces like City buildings and parks easier to access and get around.

Actions:

1. **Consider accessibility and inclusion when building new City buildings, parks, and other spaces.**
Example: A new park design has a play area that everyone can use, wide paths for getting around, and seating that works for people with different needs.
2. **Find ways to make existing City buildings and spaces easier to use when doing upgrades.**
Example: A building renovation adds ramps, door openers, better washrooms, and signs with pictures and raised letters.
3. **Give staff training so they can create spaces that work for everyone.**
Example: Staff take an accessibility class and use what they learn in a construction project.
4. **Keep partnering with people with life experiences of accessibility and inclusion to guide improvements.**
Example: Staff talk often to the Accessibility and Inclusion Advisory Committee, community groups, and residents.

Focus Area 2 – Delivery of Services

Goal: Make City programs and events more welcoming and easier to join.

Actions:

1. **Find ways to make meetings and events easier for people with different needs to take part in.**
Example: Event maps are designed so that everyone has room to move around.
2. **Give public-facing staff training to better help people with different abilities and identities.**
Example: Staff take classes about invisible disabilities and can be more helpful to more people when working at the front desk.
3. **Review recreation guides, programs, and tools to make them easier to use.**
Example: Classes in the guide are described so people know what to expect and what supports are available.
4. **Keep partnering with groups and neighbouring communities to share ideas, knowledge, and tools.**

Example: Staff learn about new tools and best practices in accessibility and inclusion.

Focus Area 3 – Employment

Goal: Make the City a more accessible and inclusive workplace.

Actions:

- 1. Help staff learn about accessibility as part of training and professional development.**
Example: City staff who supervise others take a class on supporting staff with different learning needs and abilities.
- 2. Review employment steps like hiring, onboarding, and professional development to remove barriers.**
Example: Job postings are updated to remove certifications not needed to do the work
- 3. Keep updating City documents and guidelines to include accessibility and inclusion ideas.**
Example: Documents use clear language, include accessibility information, and work with assistive learning devices like screen readers. .
- 4. Keep working on actions in the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Recruitment and Retention Action Plan.**
Example: Staff with different needs and abilities have what they need to do well in the workplace.

Focus Area 4 – Information and Communications

Goal: Make sure people can easily find and understand information from the City.

Actions:

- 1. Keep making online platforms and communication tools better for users.**
Example: A City website update makes it easier to search and find documents. Online forms are easy to open and fill out.
- 2. Get better at sharing information that people with different language needs can understand.**
Example: Documents are in plain language, other languages, and work with assistive devices like screen readers.
- 3. Find ways to make emergency alerts better and make sure they reach and are understood by everyone.**
Example: Alerts use plain language and are shared in different formats.
- 4. Give staff tools to make it easier to write and share information for everyone to understand.**
Example: Staff use an accessible and inclusive language checklist for engagement materials.

Focus Area 5 – Procurement of Goods and Services

Goal: Think about accessibility and inclusion when buying things or working with others.

Actions:

1. **Look at ways to update purchasing guides and processes to include accessibility and inclusion.**
Example: Forms and templates are easier to find and easier to use.
2. **Look at ways to include accessibility and inclusion in project ideas.**
Example: When planning projects or purchases, staff are able to apply an accessibility and inclusion lens where appropriate.
3. **Create a Supplier Code of Conduct with clear rules.**
Example: Sellers must follow rules that support good behaviour.

Focus Area 6 – Transportation

Goal: Make Coquitlam a safer, easier, place for people to get around.

Actions:

1. **Keep using universal design to build sidewalks, bike lanes, pathways, and crossings.**
Example: Building a sidewalk that is wide enough for two wheelchair users to pass each other.
2. **Find ways to respond faster to reports about transportation accessibility issues.**
Example: A resident reports a sidewalk crack to staff and it is fixed quickly.
3. **Find ways to help people understand that everyone has a role in keeping paths safe and easy to use.**
Example: A visitor is aware of how to park without limiting someone using a wheelchair.
4. **Look at ways to keep sidewalks and crossing areas easy to move through all year.**
Example: A wheelchair user can use a plowed sidewalk soon after a snowfall.

Overarching Action:

Find and apply for grant opportunities and other funding to support accessibility and inclusion projects and upgrades across all six focus areas.

Section 4: What We Do Next and How You Can Help

What we will do with this Plan

The work in this Plan involves many staff in different positions and departments. We will work as a team to make sure work is done and report on what we do.

Moving forward City staff will:

- Keep doing work that gets rid of barriers.
- Keep listening to people with different abilities and backgrounds for new ideas.
- Appropriately act on feedback we hear from people.
- Stay up to date with changing laws and information.
- Be responsible for doing work in this Plan and tracking our progress.
- Integrate this work into our budgets but will also look for funding outside of the City to help do the things in this Plan.
- Update this plan as we learn more.

The Corporate Services' Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion team will help us take action. This team will also track our actions and share updates. We will update work in this plan every three years to keep making Coquitlam a better place to live, work, and visit.

How to find updates

The City will give regular updates on work we do to improve accessibility. You can find these updates on the City's website in:

- The City's Trimester reports to Council.
- The City's Annual Report.
- Accessibility and Inclusion Advisory Committee Meeting minutes.

Ways you can help make Coquitlam more accessible and inclusive

Accessibility and inclusion make life better for everyone. Each of us has a role in creating a welcoming and barrier-free community.

Tell us how we can do better with accessibility and inclusion, or share examples of what we are doing well:

- **Fill out our form online:** www.coquitlam.ca/accessibility.

We can also help you fill out the form. Contact us if you need help:

- **Email:** EDI@coquitlam.ca
- **Phone:** 604-927-3000 and ask for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion staff.
- **In Person:** Go to City Hall at 3000 Guildford Way and ask for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion staff. City Hall is open Monday to Friday, 8 am to 5 pm, but not on statutory holidays.

Other ways we can all work to make Coquitlam better are:

- Be respectful of others and don't assume what people can or cannot do.
- Share your experiences and ideas at community engagement events.
- Role model welcoming behaviour and attitudes for others.

Working together is an important part of this Plan. Together we can make everyone in Coquitlam feel welcome, included, and able to take part in daily life.