

# Richmond Accessibility Advisory Committee 2023 Annual Report

## Introduction

The creation of the Richmond Accessibility Advisory Committee (RAAC) was approved by City Council on November 28, 2022 to meet one of the initial requirements of the Accessible British Columbia Act. The RAAC was established in 2023 and its inaugural meeting was held on April 12 of that year. The RAAC acts as a resource and provides advice to City 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 experienced by people with disabilities in the community and advises the City on how to prevent and remove these barriers, thereby aligning its work with related requirements of the Accessible British Columbia Act. A representative from the Richmond Public Library also participates as a member of the RAAC to support the alignment of the City's and Library's efforts to advance accessibility in Richmond.

## 2023 Membership

The RAAC is to be comprised of up to 12 Council-appointed, voting members, consisting of seven citizen representatives and five organization representatives, representing Aspire Richmond, Pathways Clubhouse, Richmond Centre for Disability, Richmond Public Library and Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH). In 2023, the RAAC had 11 voting members and one vacant position designated for a Citizen Appointee – Indigenous Person representative.

## 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

## 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 two non-voting City of Richmond representatives:

- Councillor Bill McNulty, Council Liaison
- Melanie Burner, Program Manager, Social Development, Staff Liaison

## 2023 Highlights

The RAAC held six meetings in 2023 from April 2023 to November 2023, with no meeting scheduled in August or December 2023. Over the initial six meetings, 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. Highlights of the RAAC's 2023 meetings included:

### 1) Draft Richmond Accessibility Plan

The RAAC shared their expertise and knowledge during each stage of development of the draft Richmond Accessibility Plan to help guide the project. This included reviewing findings from the initial consultation with people with disabilities, their families and caregivers and local disability-serving organizations, and providing feedback on the recommended actions included in the draft Plan. The RAAC also provided input into the public engagement plan.

### 2) Applying an accessibility lens to City initiatives

The RAAC provided an accessibility perspective to support the development of a number of new City strategies and initiatives in 2023. These included the development of the City's updated Social Development Strategy, the new accessibility features of the City's refreshed website, ongoing accessibility-related transportation improvements and current seniors and age-friendly initiatives that work to advance accessibility in the community.

### 3) Ongoing identification of barriers in the community

During each meeting held in 2023, the RAAC designated time to discuss barriers they, or individuals they support, have identified in the community, as well as discussing potential ways to remove and prevent these barriers. Areas of concern identified by the committee were forwarded to the appropriate City departments for follow up.

## 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 service delivery.

- **April – Committee Orientation**

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

- **May – Richmond Accessibility Plan and Initial Consultation Findings**

Mitchell Reardon, Director of Happy Cities, and Marco Pasqua, Accessibility Consultant from Meaningful Access Consulting, presented on the development of the new Richmond Accessibility Plan, including findings from the initial consultation with people with disabilities, as well as the individuals and organizations that support them, in Richmond.

- **June – Update Social Development Strategy**

Dorothy Jo, Program Manager, Social Planning, and Donna Lee, Planner 2, Poverty Reduction, facilitated a discussion on how the City can build a more inclusive and thriving community in Richmond as part of the public engagement process for the updated Social Development Strategy that is currently being developed.

- **July – Refreshed City Website**

Gerina Heathe, Digital Communications Associate, presented on the refreshed City website, launched in April 2023, including an opportunity for the RAAC to provide feedback on the website’s new accessibility features and tools.

- **September – Ongoing Accessibility-Related Improvements to Transportation**

Lloyd Bie, Director, Transportation, and Sonali Hingorani, Manager, Transportation, presented on the department’s ongoing and future projects to make Richmond more accessible, including updates to accessible parking stalls and Accessible Pedestrian Signals (APS). The RAAC was given the opportunity to share feedback and discuss barriers within the built environment.

- **October – New Seniors Strategy and Dementia-Friendly Community Action Plan**

Anthony Kupferschmidt, Program Lead, Seniors, presented on the new Seniors Strategy 2022–2032 and Dementia-Friendly Community Action Plan, in addition to current seniors and age-friendly initiatives that work to advance accessibility.

## **Conclusion and Acknowledgements**

Throughout its inaugural year, the Richmond Accessibility Advisory Committee has been honoured to represent the diversity of people with disabilities in Richmond and remains committed to meeting the legislative requirements of the Accessible British Columbia Act. We would like to thank Mayor Malcolm Brodie and City Councillors for their support of the RAAC. As well, we express our gratitude to Staff Liaison Melanie Burner for addressing RAAC feedback on accessibility barriers in the community. We look forward to continuing to make Richmond more accessible and inclusive through our work in 2024.

Submitted by:



Rob Sleath, Chair  
Richmond Accessibility Advisory Committee