



# City of Richmond

## Report to Committee

**To:** General Purposes Committee  
**From:** Mike Kirk  
 Deputy Chief Administrative Officer  
**Re:** Global Accessibility Initiative

**Date:** December 7, 2010  
**File:** 07-3300-01/2010-Vol 01


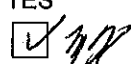
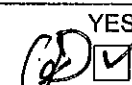
### Staff Recommendation

That the City's participation in the Global Accessibility Initiative, be endorsed as outlined in the report from the Deputy Chief Administrative Officer, dated December 7, 2010.



Mike Kirk  
 Deputy Chief Administrative Officer  
 (604-276-4142)

Att. 2

FOR ORIGINATING DEPARTMENT USE ONLY			
ROUTED TO:	CONCURRENCE		CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER
Budgets	Y	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
Parks Planning, Design & Construction	Y	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
Recreation	Y	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
Policy Planning	Y	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
Transportation	Y	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
Project Development and Facilities Management	Y	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
Development Applications	Y	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>REVIEWED BY TAG</b>	YES	NO	
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 	<input type="checkbox"/>	 YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>

## Staff Report

### Origin

The Global Accessibility Initiative is a comprehensive five point rating system, assessment tool, and set of guidelines that will provide practical online information regarding the level of accessibility of buildings in participating communities. It is an initiative of the Rick Hansen Foundation that is being launched to celebrate the organisation's twenty-fifth anniversary.

In mid 2010, the Rick Hansen Foundation approached the City and Richmond Centre for Disability (RCD), to explore ways in which the three agencies could work in partnership to plan and implement this initiative. An overview of the proposal, prepared by the Rick Hansen Foundation, is presented in **Attachment 1**. Additional information from the RCD is presented in **Attachment 2**.

This report provides background on the Global Accessibility Initiative and a proposal regarding the City's involvement in the initiative. It is responding to two Council Term Goals.

- *advance the City's destination status and ensure our continued development as a vibrant cultural city*
- *improve the effectiveness of the delivery of social services in the City*

### Findings Of Fact

For over 25 years, the City of Richmond has been working with the disability community, advocates, and supporters, towards the goal of making Richmond the most accessible community in Canada. A key community partner for the City in these efforts has been the RCD, which in 2010 celebrates its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Likewise, the Rick Hansen Foundation has spent several years as an advocate, and a campaigning and capacity building organisation for those living with disabilities. The Global Accessibility Initiative was chosen as a project to celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Rick Hansen "Man in Motion World Tour". It was motivated by the recognition that there is not one standard assessment tool or accessibility rating system that has been universally adopted across Canada and internationally. Countries in Asia, Europe and North America will be testing the Global Accessibility Initiative. The official global launch will occur at an international conference called "Interdependence 2012", to be held in Vancouver in May 2012.

The Global Accessibility Initiative offers an opportunity for the City to be an "early adopter" beta site for this initiative. By assuming this role, the City of Richmond can be a world leader at the cutting edge of creating fully accessible cities. The City's connections with a range of community partners, and its history of work with the RCD, puts it in a unique position to make this happen.

The Global Accessibility Initiative builds on existing work in the accessibility field. Between 2006 and 2008, the RCD implemented a project called "Access Richmond", which was funded

by the City. This is an online database with information on accessibility assessments carried out on a range of public and private facilities. Involvement in the Global Accessibility Initiative would allow this information to be updated, expanded and collated into the five star rating system.

The City of Richmond's proposed role in this project would be:

- Assistance with the testing and evaluation of the Global Accessibility Initiative project assessment tool.
- Assistance with the collection of baseline data on accessibility initiatives in Richmond, including existing information held by the "Access Richmond" project, and with collating information on the accessibility of Richmond's public and commercial facilities.
- Coordinating input, marketing, and messaging to partner organisations e.g.: Richmond Olympic Oval, School District 38, Richmond Chamber of Commerce, Richmond based service clubs and non-profits, YVR, RCMP, and Richmond Fire Rescue.
- Assisting with the implementation of market research and dissemination of project findings about assessed facilities/promotion of best practice.
- Assistance with the funding and recruitment of an Accessibility Analyst staff position to be based at Richmond Centre for Disability. This position would be for a period of six months to work directly in assisting the City in its work with the Rick Hansen Foundation. The incumbent would carry out new assessments, update existing assessments and work on sharing the information contained in these existing accessibility assessments so that they can be transferred to, and shared with, the newly designed Global Accessibility Database.
- Rolling out project outcomes to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.
- The City costs for this initiative is estimated at \$13,000.

## **Analysis**

Communities across Canada, including Richmond, have been making continued efforts to increase accessibility through facilitating such measures as curb cuts, ramps elevators, automatic doors, panels featuring Braille, housing developments that include accessible suites, audible traffic signals and designated parking spots. Nonetheless there is still a great deal to be done and the level of accessibility differs vastly amongst communities.

Currently, as part of the City's 2041 Official Community Plan (OCP) Update, City staff are meeting with the RCD to explore how the City can be made more "accessible" and "visitable" (e.g., in the public realm, streets, parks and in buildings). Part of this exploration will include a

review of recent Provincial Government's "Adaptable Housing Standard Guidelines". "Adaptable housing" is an approach to residential design and construction in which homes can be modified, at minimal cost, to meet occupants' changing needs over time. By building flexibility into homes from the start, adaptable housing helps people stay in their own homes through illness, injury and aging; provides more accessibility for people with disabilities; and reduces the cost of future renovations to accommodate people with disabilities. Adaptable housing includes:

- Basic accessibility features such as corridors, doorways;
- Bathrooms and kitchens that facilitate access for people with mobility limitations, design and construction features to support future installation of grab bars in the bathroom;
- Purpose-built features that are incorporated during initial construction, such as accessible positioning of electrical outlets and switches and design of door and faucet handles.

This is important as the RCD advises that many people develop their accessibility limitations gradually over time or suddenly through life events (e.g., accidents) - hence the need for adaptable housing.

The Global Accessibility Initiative, if successful, will empower people living with disabilities in Richmond, to make informed decisions and leverage in their consumer power to help increase accessibility. This initiative will also inform businesses, providing them with the information and tools to become more accessible and increase their understanding of the economic benefits of accessible venues and communities. With this two pronged approach, (empowering people living with disabilities and facilitating buy in amongst the business community), the initiative will create widespread access awareness across Richmond and provide an impetus for communities, businesses and City departments to make change, measure progress over time, and increase accessibility for all members of society.

Good accessibility within our city is essential for all sections of the community, not just those living with a disability. Richmond has an aging population and increasing numbers of people in need of fully accessible facilities and services e.g.: pregnant woman and families using strollers. There is thus a fit between the City of Richmond's priorities in relation to accessibility, and the Global Accessibility Initiative. There is also a fit with all three pillars of the City's sustainability agenda in that the initiative promotes economic, social, and environmental benefits for all.

Involvement in the Global Accessibility Initiative will allow the City and RCD to take existing accessibility assessment information, update it, and make it internationally recognized and relevant through the development of a five star rating system. In addition, Richmond's involvement in this initiative will allow the City an opportunity to partner and learn from one of Canada's leading disability organisations and experts on accessibility, and continue our efforts to improve the overall accessibility of our community. The City's role as an "early adopter" for this project should also raise the City's profile as a leader and a destination, both nationally and internationally.

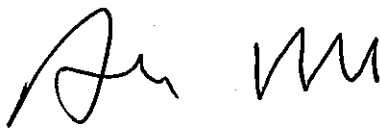
### **Financial Impact**

The financial impact would be \$13,000 for the funding of a staff position based at Richmond Centre for Disability. It is proposed that this funding be provided from General Contingency. This would be *one-time* funding and the person recruited would be employed directly by Richmond Centre for Disability. It is planned that this position would commence in January 2011.

### **Conclusion**

The Global Accessibility Initiative is a comprehensive five star rating system, assessment tool and set of guidelines that will provide practical online information regarding the level of accessibility of buildings.

This initiative provides the City with an opportunity to strengthen its relationship with our existing partner, the RCD, as well as learning from the Rick Hansen Foundation, one of Canada's leading disability organisations and experts on accessibility. Through its involvement as an "early adopter" for this project, the City may raise its profile as a leader and a destination both nationally and internationally. It is thus recommended that the City's participation in the Global Accessibility Initiative, be endorsed as outlined in the report.



Alan Hill  
Cultural Diversity Coordinator  
(604-276-4391)

AH:ah

December 7, 2010

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**Report Attachments:**

**Attachment 1 - RCD Accessibility Focus 2011 (REDMS #3070310)**

**Attachment 2 - Rick Hansen Foundation - Discussion Document for Collaboration with  
the City of Richmond and RCD (REDMS #3073015)**



# Richmond Centre for Disability

"Promoting a new perspective on disability"

## RCD ACCESSIBILITY FOCUS 2011

### Background

Founded in 1985, the Richmond Centre for Disability (RCD) has been the advisory body to the City of Richmond on all disability and accessibility issues for over 25 years. From the start, the RCD brought individual barriers to the attention of city staff, barriers that impeded the paths of people with disabilities within the community. From this humble beginning, the RCD created accessibility awareness, one barrier at a time.

Back in 1991, the RCD, in partnership with the City's Special Needs Department, hosted an innovative workshop "Planning for better access and communication within the community towards the year 2000", which was the catalyst for a series of subsequent events to enhance accessibility and equality for people with disabilities in Richmond. They included:

- Accessibility Guidelines, which increased accessibility to City owned buildings, over and above the requirements of the provincial Building Code
- New Wheelchair Ramp Design Standard for city intersections
- Bylaws to provide for Designated Parking for Persons with Disabilities
- Emergency Preparedness Planning for People with Disabilities
- Universal Housing Design Guidelines for Multi-family developments
- Public Recognition of Businesses who focused on accessibility
- Auditing Development Plans for accessibility
- Providing an appointee to sit on the Advisory Design Panel

Moreover, in 1991 the City of Richmond was presented with the "5 Star Award for Accessibility" by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, Secretary of State and National Committee on Disabilities in recognition of its accessibility. Richmond was the only City in Canada to receive the full 5-star designation at that time; and the RCD was the driving force behind this achievement.

### Access Richmond Project (2006-2008)

In 2007, the RCD implemented an initiative, supported by the City of Richmond, to further improve the accessibility awareness of and within the City. The City had provided a special three-year funding for the RCD's Accessibility Project from 2006-2008.

Some of the outcomes of the project included:

- Develop the Access Richmond website which highlights the accessibility of hotels, restaurants, key tourism destinations and special services in the City of Richmond (<http://www.accessrichmond.ca>).
- Perform accessibility audits for tourism and hospitality businesses in Richmond and published the findings on the Access Richmond website; currently there are 122 listings published.
- Conduct Disability Awareness and Sensitivity Training for tourism and hospitality businesses to promote attitudinal accessibility for persons with disabilities
- Strategize with the community on the concept of Accessibility and Accessible Tourism

### **Accessibility Strategy for 2011**

The RCD has intent to bring the Accessibility Project to a new level by working together with community partners that have innovative ideas to promote accessibility and ultimately full participation of people with disabilities. When Rick Hansen Foundation announced the launch of its Global Accessibility Initiative, we see the light at the end of the tunnel. This comprehensive 5-star rating system, to be made available via mobile hand held devices with online GPS navigation systems, aims to provide people with disabilities with the practical information they need to evaluate accessibility options in the built environment, make informed decisions, and leverage user power for improved accessibility in our society.

The RCD is supportive of this initiative and also committed to be an active part of its beta site pilot which proposes to conduct the 5-star rating assessment in Richmond. It is excited to see a joint venture of our accessibility expertise and their technological innovation to create an accessibility movement in the City of Richmond; this is a three-win situation which can be replicated to the bigger world to create global awareness and provide an impetus for communities, business and governments to make changes, and measure progress toward full accessibility over time.

We are proposing to the City of Richmond to provide funding for a part-time Accessibility Analyst position for a period of 6 months to work with Rick Hansen Foundation's Global Accessibility Initiative. The incumbent, with extensive experience in accessibility assessment, will receive specific training of the project and its implementation, and perform field works accordingly. The accessibility audit outcomes will be submitted for project analysis and updating of Access Richmond website.

Proposal: Part-time Accessibility Analyst – 3 days a week

Funding Request:	Salary	3 days x 7.5 hours x \$18 x 26 weeks =	\$10,530
	MERCs	CPP 4.95% + EI 2.422% =	\$ 777
	Administration	10% =	\$ 1,130
	<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$ 12,437</b>





## Global Accessibility Initiative

### A Discussion Document for Collaboration with the City of Richmond and Richmond Centre for Disability

#### Introduction

Significant progress already has been made in developing standards and tools for accessibility. However, no one assessment tool or accessibility rating system has been uniformly applied across Canada—much less globally—and there is a need for such consistency.

In response to this need, Rick Hansen Foundation (RHF) is launching the Global Accessibility Initiative. This comprehensive 5-Point rating system, assessment tool and guidelines will provide practical and easily accessible online information through the World Wide Web regarding the level of accessibility of the built environment and transportation services. The Global Accessibility Initiative will:

- Provide people living with disabilities with easily accessible and consistent information to evaluate accessibility options, make informed decisions and leverage consumer power for improved accessibility in our society;
- Provide an impetus and tools for businesses, service providers and government to assess the accessibility of their built venues and measure progress over time.

The 5-Point Rating Tool is similar in concept to the IHA's 5-Star program for rating hotels; in this case, it identifies the *level of accessibility* of public built environments based on a one-to-five point rating. The Tool is based on international best practice standards already approved by organizations such as the CSA, ISO and ADA.

Both the Rick Hansen Foundation (RHF) Global Accessibility Initiative (GAI) as well as the Richmond Centre for Disability (RCD) share a common vision of an all-inclusive society, where persons with disabilities have the ability to move about independently, and participate in all aspects of their community.

At a practical level, the GAI manifests itself in a number of interrelated projects:

1. Accessibility experts are developing a new, comprehensive international accessibility standard covering:
  - The specification of accessibility criteria for venues such as hotels and theatres;
  - The interpretation of criteria into an easy-to-understand, ordinal rating;
2. A software system (GAIS) incorporating this standard is being developed to support a global database of accessibility ratings for geographic venues with online, map-based access for users using either desktop or location-aware mobile devices.

One of the services RCD offers is the Access Richmond website, which provides an online database of venues that have been surveyed and evaluated on their accessibility according to standards set by the BC Building Access Handbook.

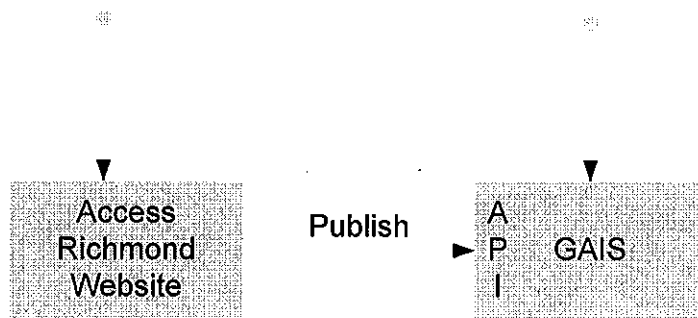
RHF proposes a GAI partnership whereby RHF and RCD work together to achieve common accessibility goals. The shared vision of an inclusive society provides a sound basis for collaboration. More specifically, the proposed GAI partnership results in the technical integration of the Access Richmond Website with GAIS.

## Proposal

In today's world, there is an abundance of accessibility information that exists in digital form. However, this data is managed by independent systems, which do not interoperate or share information. This results in the so-called *information silo* problem, which poses a significant barrier to high levels of data usage – especially at the consumer level.

The objective of the proposed GAI partnership is to promote accessibility information-sharing through integration of the Access Richmond website (AR) with GAIS. On a larger scale, the Global Accessibility Initiative is actively pursuing partnerships with other organizations managing online accessibility information. As these partnerships are established over time, the usage barrier represented by the information silo problem is reduced incrementally.

This AR and GAIS integration configuration is illustrated below.



**Figure 1. GAIS Integration**

GAIS supports an integration, web services api (application programming interface), which enables AR to publish accessibility information to GAIS, thereby providing GAIS users with read-only access to Access Richmond data. Over time, as new information is added to AR, or existing records are updated, changes are published to GAIS through the integration api. It is important to note that AR continues to own and manage its own data, and to represent data in its own format. GAIS integration simply acts as a mechanism for reaching a larger audience.

## Benefits to the City of Richmond

Two prime benefits to the City of Richmond may be achieved through participation in the Global Accessibility Initiative.

The first has a social policy orientation: participation will help the City take a step closer to realizing its commitment to being the most livable community in Canada. Richmond's leadership in creating accessible public spaces is reinforced.

The second benefit is economic value-driven: as Richmond's reputation grows in creating accessible and inclusive neighbourhoods, the City will have great opportunity to tap into a powerful consumer market that, to date, has been largely overlooked—particularly in the tourism sector.

## Value-in-Kind (VIK) Contributions from RHF

RHF offers the following VIK contributions towards this collaboration:

- Use of the GAI 5-Point Rating System;
- Use of a Guidelines document for guidance on how to build towards a 5-Point Rating;
- Consulting support towards data integration from the GAI software development team.

## Integration Tasks

This section identifies the tasks involved in integrating AR and GAIS. In each case the role of RHF and RCD staff is described. All RHF contributions are value-in-kind.

Task		Description	RCD	RHF
Analyze Accessibility Data	AR	The semantics of AR accessibility information is analyzed and compared with the RHF accessibility standard. A mapping is established between AR accessibility criteria and RHF ratings (e.g. what constitutes a 3 star rating?).	Supports	Leads
Specify Accessibility Schema	AR Data	AR accessibility modules and criteria are formally described at the data type level (e.g. in a specification language such as XML Schema) and uploaded to GAIS.	Leads	Supports - Consulting
Develop Publication code	AR Handler	A Publication Handler is software that is uploaded to GAIS and stored against the name of a partner system (e.g. AR). The handler for AR is looked up by GAIS, and invoked whenever new AR records are published. The AR handler interprets each AR record (i.e. assigns a rating), creates a GAIS Assessments Index entry, and stores a read-only copy of the assessment data in the GAIS Assessments Database.		Solely Responsible
Modify AR to invoke GAIS Integration api			Leads	Supports - Consulting

## Major Timelines

Phase 1 – October 2009 to September 2010: Pilot and Plan

- ✦ Initial Planning
- ✦ Olympic/Paralympic Pilots
- ✦ Completion of Mobility Assessment Tools

Phase 2 – September 2010 to December 2010: Design and Build

- ✦ Begin Design and Build of Software Solutions
- ✦ Test Software Solutions
- ✦ Gather and Assimilate Data

**Phase 3 – January 2011 to May 2012: Initial Roll-Out**

- ✦ Complete Design, Build and Test of Software Solutions
- ✦ Initial Roll-out: Canada and six selected countries (e.g. USA, China, UK, Australia, Israel, Switzerland)

**Phase 4 – Beyond May 2012: Global Expansion and Continuous Improvement**

- ✦ Global expansion and continuous improvement of system

**Development Dates of Direct Interest to City of Richmond:**

1. Data Provider Integration Process Defined – Aug 1, 2011
2. Partner Data Integration framework completed – Oct 1, 2011