

# Accessibility Plan Annual Report 2024



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# Commitment to Accessibility

The City of St. John's is committed to an accessible, inclusive, healthy and safe community for everyone. We strive to meet the diverse needs of our community by identifying, preventing and removing barriers so that all people can equitably live, work, play and learn here.

In December of 2023, City Council approved the City's first multi-year **accessibility plan**, demonstrating a commitment to improve accessibility and inclusion in programs, services and spaces operated by the City.

Guided by the **Provincial Accessibility Act**, the City's **Inclusion Advisory Committee**, **Metrobus Accessibility Committee** and a comprehensive **public engagement**, the City has set goals and actions to identify, prevent and remove barriers to better meet the accessibility needs of our community.

The City understands that focusing on accessibility and inclusion is an important preventative measure that contributes to the overall health and well-being of people living with disabilities. A collaborative approach among government, organizations, and the community is necessary to create an environment where everyone thrives.

The City is improving accessibility and inclusion in six key focus areas:

- Design and Delivery of Programs and Services
- Built Environment and Transportation
- Information and Communication
- Accommodations
- Procurement
- Employment

This annual report outlines the progress made on the accessibility goals and actions in 2024, as well as next steps for 2025 and 2026.



# Celebrations

The City proudly celebrated **National AccessAbility Week** in May and **International Day of Persons with Disabilities** in December through proclamations, programming and information sharing.

On October 1, the Mayor proclaimed October as **Disability Awareness Employment Month**, which created awareness and acknowledged the importance for employment inclusion.

The City's Accessibility and Inclusion Facilitator was the 2024 recipient of Recreation Newfoundland and Labrador's Inclusion Award. This award recognizes an individual that has furthered the inclusion of persons with disabilities within the area of recreation, sport and active living.

In the past, the City of St. John's was honoured to have received recognitions including a Community Partner Award from the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) and a Social Inclusion Award from Empower NL. These awards are presented to organizations notable for their work in creating opportunities for people living with disabilities to participate in and contribute to their community.

Celebrating accessibility and inclusion creates awareness and develops strong partnerships that have positive impacts on community inclusion. It strengthens a culture where everyone feels welcome and that they belong.



# Disability Statistics Update

The Canadian Survey on Disability, 2022, was released December in 2023. The survey results provide important disability-related data for service providers like municipalities. The information influences planning and evaluation of programs, services and policies that impact people with disabilities and their ability to participate in and benefit from their community.

## Survey findings include:

- The Canadian disability rate rose from 22.3% in 2017, to 27% or 8 million people, as of 2022.
- The Newfoundland and Labrador (NL) disability rate increased from 23.6% in 2017 to 30.9%, or nearly 1 in 3 people, as of 2022.
- NL has the fifth highest disability rate in Canada.
- An aging population and a large increase in mental health related disabilities among youth and working age adults are noted as contributing factors for the rising disability rates in Canada.
- Canadian youth aged 15-24 years experienced the largest increase in disability rate, from 13% in 2017 to 20% as of 2022.
- Canadian disability rates are higher among women+<sup>1</sup> at 30%, than men+<sup>1</sup> at 24%.
- 6 in 10 persons with disabilities in Canada noted they experienced barriers related to accessing indoor and outdoor public spaces.
- Mental health related disabilities experienced the largest disability rate increase in Canada.
- Pain related disabilities experienced the largest disability rate increase in NL.
- Of the 5 most prevalent types of disabilities in NL, 3 are invisible (i.e. pain, flexibility, mental health) and 2 may be visible or invisible (i.e. mobility and vision).

<sup>1</sup> The category of “women +” includes women and some non-binary persons while the category of “men+” includes men and some non-binary persons. Due to the small sample size of the non-binary population, data aggregation to a two-category gender variable is most of the time necessary to protect the confidentiality of the responses provided.

## Sources:

**The Daily — Canadian Survey on Disability, 2017 to 2022**  
**Disability Type by Age Group and Gender in NL Canada**  
**New data on disability in Canada, 2022**



# General Progress Overview

The City's first multi-year accessibility plan includes 19 goals and 70 actions to improve accessibility and inclusion. Designated Accessibility Leads across all City departments began work on 51 of the actions in 2024, with the remaining work scheduled to begin in 2025 and 2026.

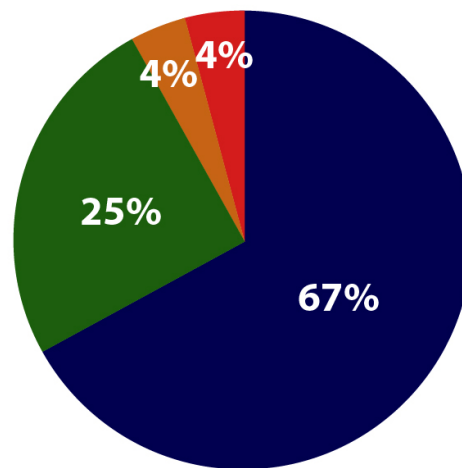
As the plan progresses, new opportunities for improvement may be discovered, which may change the number of goals and actions. Factors that can influence this may include the implementation of new City projects, funding opportunities, best practices and new provincial accessibility regulations.

The following is a brief overview of the progress made on the 51 accessibility and inclusion actions initiated in 2024:

- 13 actions complete
- 34 actions in progress and on track
- 2 actions behind but progressing
- 2 actions overdue but progressing

## 2024 Accessibility and Inclusion Actions

■ Complete   ■ On Track   ■ Behind   ■ Overdue



Progress highlights for each key focus area are included in the sections that follow. A full progress report for 2024 is included as [Appendix A](#). The full report outlines the 19 goals, 51 actions, current completion status and a detailed update on progress made for each action as of the end of 2024.

# Progress Highlights for the Design and Delivery of Programs and Services

The City has made progress in improving accessibility in the design and delivery of programs and services.

## Highlights include:

- A review of waste collection procedures, information and communications was completed and resulted in the development of a bin placement awareness campaign, aimed to reduce sidewalk accessibility barriers created by improper placement.
- A Recreation Division Inclusion Support Process review identified several opportunities for improvements such as updating and rebranding information for comprehension and clarity, streamlining the application and intake procedures, and enhancing opportunities for participants with respite support.
- The Inclusion Advisory Committee and Accessible Parking Working Group recommended actions for improving accessible parking procedures that are being investigated/implemented where possible.
- A review of the GoBus no show policy, customer feedback processes and driver recruitment efforts was completed. Ride denials were reduced, and weekend availability has become comparable to weekday availability.
- City staff received orientations in accessibility and inclusion in Service Excellence, Respectful Workplace and Inclusive Recreation training. Staff also participated in training and learning opportunities related to disability awareness, adaptive equipment and technology, accessibility legislation, digital accessibility, gender diversity, cultural diversity, accessible built environments and outdoor spaces, poverty reduction and customer service.
- Eleven kilometers of sidewalks were added to the sidewalk snow clearing program.
- Staff are working with the Inclusion Advisory Committee and Universal Design Network Newfoundland and Labrador to create universal design guidelines for the Housing Accelerator Fund project and other housing initiatives.



# Progress Highlights for Built Environment and Transportation

The City has made progress in improving accessibility in the built environment and transportation.

## Highlights include:

- New and existing facility accessibility was improved by implementing design standards from the **CSA B651-23 Accessible Design for the Built Environment**, where possible.
- Southlands and Shea Heights Community Centres received new raised garden beds funded by the Conservation Corps Growing Through the Ages Program. Beds were installed at accessible locations and a curb was reduced at Southlands Community Centre, creating an accessible route from the parking lot.
- Six new accessible swings, funded in part by Government of Canada's Enabling Accessibility Fund, were installed at City playgrounds.
- A beach access mat, donated by the St. John's Rotary Club, was installed along Rotary Park beach and will be installed seasonally going forward.
- New large print wayfinding signage was installed at Rotary Park trails at key decision points.
- New accessible rest areas, funded in part by a provincial Accessible Communities Grant, were installed at Bidgood Park, Rotary Park and areas along the new Kelly's Brook shared-use path.
- Approximately 18 kilometers of shared-use paths have been developed and another 11 kilometers are being designed and constructed.
- Accessible bus shelters were installed at 5 new locations along Metrobus routes, bringing the total to 75.
- Accessible pedestrian signals were installed at 5 intersections.
- Crosswalk accessibility was improved at 12 locations.





# Progress Highlights for Information and Communications

The City has made progress in improving accessibility in information and communications.

## Highlights include:

- The **Curb It St. John's** and **Robin Hood Bay** websites were updated to meet Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 AA.
- A review of **the corporate website** is ongoing. Efforts are being made to streamline information, update language where possible and provide information in a clear, concise manner.
- Social media posts consistently include alternative text (alt text) or image descriptions (ID) for photos and graphics.
- An assistive hearing device inventory was completed. Four new Pocket Talker, assistive listening devices were purchased resulting in all City-operated recreation facilities, community centres and Access 311 being equipped to assist people with hearing loss.
- The City's Brand Standards were updated, improving accessibility and inclusion by ensuring our diverse community is reflected in images and by aligning with accessibility standards for colour contrast, font type and font size.
- A dedicated **accessible parking webpage** and interactive **parking map**, outlining accessible on street parking locations, was developed.
- Metrobus improved accessibility of information for riders by creating an accessibility quick access menu on the Metrobus website.



# Progress Highlights for Procurement

The City has made progress in improving accessibility through procurement.

## Highlights include:

- Recent contracts for the para-transit service provider and eligibility assessment services were reviewed. Revisions ensured accessibility and inclusion considerations were clearly stated.
- Procurement training for City staff was updated to include a section to ensure staff consider accessibility and inclusion in procurement processes.
- Procurement templates are being reviewed and will be updated to reflect best practices from other jurisdictions where appropriate.
- Eight new busses purchased include forward facing wheelchair securement systems.
- All newly procured busses are wheelchair accessible and is a standard requirement for future procurement.



# Progress Highlights for Accommodations

The City has made progress in improving accessibility through accommodations.

## Highlights include:

- The Attendant Pass guidelines were reviewed. Recommendations include improving clarity, following Clear Print Guidelines and creating guidelines for participating venues.
- A statement for active accommodation offers has been developed and is communicated when inviting the public to participate in a program or event more consistently.
- The City drafted an Accessibility Accommodations Policy to reduce barriers, promote participation and create awareness. The policy will adhere to relative accessibility and inclusion regulations and best practices, ensuring equitable access to programs, services and spaces.



# Progress Highlights for Employment

The City has made progress in improving accessibility and inclusion in employment.

## Highlights include:

- A new employee online learning platform, Reach 360, was launched. It offers a user-friendly interface, multilingual option, compatibility with assistive technologies, closed captioning and read aloud features, flexibility of where and when learning takes place and accommodates different learning styles.
- The Employment Equity Policy was updated to align with current legislation and includes more inclusive language.
- A new Psychological Wellness Committee was established with a goal to enhance mental wellness in the workplace. Committee initiatives include offering lunch and learns and courses on topics for improving employee mental wellness.
- Human Resources staff are investigating ways to create and support employment opportunities for individuals with intellectual disabilities.
- City job postings have been reviewed and updated using Clear Print Guidelines.
- All employment applicant requests for accommodations in 2024 were accommodated.



# Next Steps

More exciting work is planned to further improve accessibility and inclusion in City programs, services and spaces.

## Upcoming plans include:

- Opening the new H.G.R. Mews Community Centre and new accessible community garden.
- Enhance accessibility in City playgrounds by installing of over 20 new playground communication boards, up to 3 new accessible swings, developing an online map identifying playgrounds that include accessible equipment and installing new accessible play equipment and accessible surface at Bowring Park playground.
- Install new accessible pedestrian signals at prioritized intersections.
- Finalize an Accessibility Accommodations Policy.
- Increase the number of housing units in the city that include universal design through the Housing Accelerator Fund.
- Investigate new staff training and learning opportunities as well as opportunities to improve public awareness about matters of accessibility and inclusion.
- Improve winter pedestrian route accessibility by adding an additional 8 kilometers to the sidewalk snow clearing program.
- Develop a new Metrobus Diversity and Inclusion Policy.
- Install 6 new accessible bus shelters to bring the total number to 81.
- Purchase 8 new wheelchair accessible busses.
- Implement Metrobus route 10 as a wheelchair accessible route and plan for additional wheelchair accessible routes.
- Implement a new automated onboard stop announcement system on all Metrobus routes.



## Summary

Successful implementation and ongoing efforts to meet and exceed the goals set in the first year of a 3-year accessibility plan is important for laying the foundation for long-term success. In 2024, significant learning occurred, leading to a shift in prioritizing and planning for accessibility and inclusion in more City operations. The substantial amount of work accomplished in just one year serves as evidence of this positive change.

Year one involved further assessing the City's current state of accessibility, identifying key areas for improvement and creating awareness. The City made commitments to investigate strategies and solutions for improving accessibility but often exceeded those expectations by also implementing the findings. The success of the first year demonstrates a strong commitment to accessibility and helps build momentum for the entire plan.

As the plan advances into years 2 and 3, keeping focus is essential to maintain progress, continue to break down barriers and work through new challenges. In year 2 the City will refine processes and continue to build awareness, both externally and internally, to ensure accessibility and inclusion become an integral part of city planning.

In year 3, work will continue on the outstanding goals and actions while assessing the effectiveness and impact of the progress achieved. The City will also be planning public engagement to receive feedback on the progress made and prioritize new goals for the 2027-2029 Accessibility Plan.

The City understands that there is more work to be done but hopes that the early successes demonstrated in the first year of the plan builds a level of trust and continued engagement from people with disabilities, their caregivers and families.



# Accessibility Feedback

Sharing accessibility concerns or ideas for improvement is important. If we don't know about it, we can't investigate it or fix it. Together we can build a more accessible City of St. John's.

Please note that a new customer service management software is planned for 2025. Stay tuned to City communications for updates.

Non-emergency accessibility concerns or ideas can be submitted 24 hours a day, 7 days a week in a way that is accessible to you.

- **Phone** 311 or 1-709-754-2489 (CITY) and select the category of your accessibility concern. If your concern doesn't match a category, stay on the line and you will be directed to a customer service representative
- Visit us **online** at [StJohns.ca](https://stjohns.ca) and select "contact us" from the top banner to submit a service request
- **Email** [access@stjohns.ca](mailto:access@stjohns.ca)
- **In person**, at Access St. John's located at inside City Hall at 10 New Gower Street



# Staff and Council Contact Information

For more information about this report, the 2024-2026 Accessibility Plan or accessibility in City of St. John's programs, services and spaces, contact **Council** or the Accessibility and Inclusion Facilitator.

## Accessibility and Inclusion Facilitator

1-709-576-4450

[inclusion@stjohns.ca](mailto:inclusion@stjohns.ca)

[StJohns.ca/AccessibilityAndInclusion](https://StJohns.ca/AccessibilityAndInclusion)







# **Appendix A**

## **Accessibility Plan Annual Report 2024**

# Design and Delivery of Programs and Services

**Goal:** Investigate opportunities to improve accessibility of recreation and leisure programs and services

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**Action: Review the Recreation Inclusion Support application and process to identify areas of improvement. Complete**

Inclusion support to participate in City of St. John's, Recreation programs may be available to eligible applicants subject to availability of resources. Inclusion support may include minor adaptations and accommodations, partial support from Recreation staff, or one-on-one support from City-provided Inclusion Support Staff. Participants may also attend with their own Respite Support (provided independently or by a third party). The demand for Inclusion Support has increased significantly since 2019. As a result, Healthy City and Inclusion staff reviewed the existing Inclusion Support application and process to identify areas for improvement. Several areas of improvement were noted such as:

- A rebranding of and updates to the application form to better reflect current services
- Opportunities to streamline the application and intake process
- Opportunities to improve access to City programs for participants who provide their own Respite Support

A new application form and pilot process will be launched in 2025.

**Action: Investigate funding opportunities to improve accessibility of recreation programs and services. On Track**

The City was successful in securing funding from Recreation NL's 2024 Recreation and Sport for Persons with a Disability Funding Program towards the purchase of a new hippocampe all-terrain wheelchair for the Adaptive Equipment Lending Program. Staff continue to seek and apply for funding opportunities to improve accessibility of recreation programs and services.

**Action: Implement an accessible, neighbourhood based recreation program. Complete**

The Recreation Division offers a range of accessible and inclusive programs including but not limited to adapted swim lessons, Pursuing Active Lifestyles (PALs), TIME™ Together in Movement and Exercise, and Ever Active. Public engagement for the Healthy City Strategy and Recreation Master Plan identified a desire for a low-barrier, low-impact neighbourhood-based recreation programs. In August 2024, the Recreation Division launched Trail Explorers, an active living program designed for all members of our community. This program provides an opportunity to explore parks and trails throughout the City with Recreation Division staff. It is a free, drop-in program and accessibility is a key consideration in planning program information and communication, equipment and weekly routes. Participants can walk or wheel with their mobility device or borrow equipment from the City's Adaptive Equipment Lending program to participate.

**Goal:** Investigate opportunities to improve services that impact accessible pedestrian routes

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**Action: Investigate methods to improve accessibility of sidewalks in winter and make recommendations. On Track**

A total of 175 kms of sidewalks and shared-use paths (including Kelly's Brook) have been prioritized for snow clearing and ice control. This is mostly along streets where pedestrian and vehicular traffic is higher. School zones receive the highest priority for sidewalk clearing. In 2024, 11 km were added with an additional 8 km in 2025.

**Action: Increase awareness of accessibility barriers created by automated garbage bins placed on sidewalks. On Track**

In 2024, waste collection policies and informational materials were reviewed. An awareness campaign about proper curbside placement and reducing accessibility barriers was developed. The use of City communications channels including the City website, Curb It website, Curb It app notifications and "oops" stickers to promote awareness was launched in January 2025. Non-collection of improperly placed carts will be maintained moving forward. The waste collection information for new cart distribution is being reviewed and will be updated to reflect the importance of proper placement. Additionally, accessibility of the information package itself is also being reviewed.

**Action: Complete pruning inspections to identify trees and shrubs that limit accessibility and sight lines. On Track**

Roadside and elevational pruning improves accessible pedestrian routes by removing overgrowth which creates physical barriers and decreases sightlines. This work is completed based on inspections and public reports. Areas that experience higher volumes of pedestrians and vehicles are prioritized.

## **Goal:** Investigate opportunities to improve accessibility of public transportation programs and services

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### **Action: Investigate opportunities to improve access to bus stops in winter. On Track**

Metrobus clears snow at bus shelters. The City clears snow and provides ice control along 175 kms of sidewalks in winter. Eleven additional kms were added in 2024 and 8 more kms will be added in 2025. The additional sidewalk snow removal and ice control will increase access to the bus stops along these routes.

### **Action: Improve GoBus reliability. On Track**

Reliability will be improved through the development of a new “no show” policy which was drafted and was approved by the Metrobus Accessibility Committee (MAC). The policy will be implemented Spring 2025 and is anticipated to reduce time and resource loss. The MAC was also consulted regarding improvements to customer feedback procedures. Updated procedures are being developed including a new tracking process and a communications plan to ensure riders are aware. Recent efforts in driver recruitment resulted in the highest complement of drivers since pre-pandemic. Since November, there have been no ride denials and weekend availability is comparable to weekday.

### **Action: Implement Route 10 as a wheelchair accessible service route. Overdue**

Route 10 will be designated as a wheelchair accessible route when the 8 hybrid buses are received and placed into service. Three of the buses arrived in November and placed in service in December 2024. Three buses arrived on January 8 and placed into service January 28. Waiting for an update on delivery of the final two buses. It is expected that Route 10 will be designated as wheelchair accessible with the start of the summer schedule in June, 2025.

**Goal:** Investigate opportunities to improve procedures that impact accessible parking

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**Action: Consult the Accessible Parking Working Group and Inclusion Advisory Committee for recommendations to improve accessible parking procedures.**

**Complete**

The Inclusion Advisory Committee and Accessible Parking Working Group developed recommendations to improve accessible parking. Council approved staff to investigate the recommendations further.

**Action: Replace accessible parking signage as required. On Track**

All accessible parking signage identified as needing repair, replacement or installation in 2024 was completed.

**Action: Investigate and implement recommendations from the Accessible Parking Working Group and Inclusion Advisory Committee to improve accessible parking procedures, where possible. On Track**

Improvements are ongoing and include: a new dedicated accessible parking webpage, a new interactive paid parking map identifying accessible parking locations, accessible parking information is communicated with City event information, accessible parking spaces are allocated based on demand and evaluated during city event planning and construction projects, curb cuts are installed near all newly added on-street accessible parking spaces with a goal to install curb cuts near all on street accessible parking spaces, new accessible parking asphalt decals were installed and are being evaluated for durability. Decals have contrasting wide print with a nonslip texture. Staff continue to investigate improvements related to: a collaborative accessible parking awareness campaign and snow clearing procedures to improve parking accessibility.

**Goal:** Investigate opportunities to enhance staff knowledge about accessibility and inclusion

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**Action: Identify staff training and learning opportunities and make recommendations. On Track**

Staff receive orientations in accessibility and inclusion in Service Excellence and Respectful Workplace training. Summer and Casual Recreation Staff participate in Inclusive Recreation Training. City staff have also participated in optional learning opportunities related to disability awareness, adaptive equipment and technology, accessibility legislation, digital accessibility, gender diversity, cultural diversity, accessibility in the built environment and outdoor spaces, poverty reduction and customer service. The Staff Training and Learning Request Form was updated to include a section identifying if the requested training/learning enhances accessibility and/or inclusion in their work. Going forward, this will be a tool for data collection. Ongoing investigation includes sourcing or developing an introductory accessibility and inclusion course for staff to be implemented by the end of 2026.

**Goal:** Investigate opportunities to ensure accessibility is considered at the planning stage of City projects and make recommendations

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**Action: Evaluate the use of accessibility and inclusion implications in the decision making process (Briefing Notes). On Track**

The Healthy City and Inclusion Team are increasingly consulted for project-related accessibility and inclusion considerations since the implementation of the Accessibility Plan. In 2024, the Inclusion Advisory Committee was consulted regarding projects such as: On Street Electric Vehicle Charging, Future Pedestrian Mall Planning, Rotary Park accessibility improvements, Housing Accelerator Fund and Accessibility Top Up, Street Name Inventory, Recreation Inclusion Support and City Communications Brand Standard Development. Seventy-nine samples of Briefing Notes submitted to Council between October 1 - December 31 were collected. The use of the Accessibility and Inclusion Key Considerations/ Implications section is being evaluated.

**Goal:** Investigate opportunities to improve accessibility of City-owned Affordable Housing procedures

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**Action: Investigate opportunities to improve accessibility of the Affordable Housing Application. On Track**

City owned affordable housing applicants and tenants must submit Proof of Income (Option C) from the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA). Accessing this document is challenging for applicants and tenants which creates a barrier in the Housing application process. The City would prefer to collect Option Cs directly from CRA on behalf of applicants and tenants, however, current legislation prevents this. The City continues to advocate for changes to the City of St. John's Act that would provide the legislative authority required to address this issue. Communication between the City and the Province on this matter is ongoing. Investigation into the possibility of submitting affordable housing applications online is scheduled to begin in quarter 1 of 2025.

# Built Environment and Transportation

**Goal:** Investigate opportunities to improve accessible parking, with a focus on downtown

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**Action: Consult the Accessible Parking Working Group and Inclusion Advisory Committee for recommendations to improve accessible parking downtown.**

**Complete**

The Inclusion Advisory Committee and Accessible Parking Working Group developed recommendations to improve accessible parking. Council approved staff to investigate the recommendations further.

**Action: Investigate and implement recommendations from the Accessible Parking Working Group and Inclusion Advisory Committee to improve accessible parking downtown, where possible. On Track**

Three new accessible on-street parking spaces were added in the downtown core near The Majestic Theatre, The War Memorial and The Keg restaurant bringing the total number of on-street spaces to 26. New accessible parking space asphalt decals were installed and are being evaluated for durability. These supplement the vertical signage and improve accessible parking space identification. Two new accessible parking spaces were added to the second floor of the parking garage at City Hall. Improvements to accessible parking information on the City's website and the new interactive map, will further assist people as they plan their visit to the downtown.



## **Goal:** Increase the number of affordable housing units with accessibility features

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### **Action: Consult the Affordable Housing Working Group and Inclusion Advisory Committee for strategies to increase accessible housing. On Track**

Healthy City and Inclusion staff presented an overview of the 2024-2026 Accessibility Plan to the Affordable Housing Working Group and requested feedback for improving accessibility of its units, in December 2024. The Inclusion Advisory Committee and Universal Design Network NL provided input on universal design and accessibility considerations for the City's Housing Accelerator Fund Grant Program for Subsidiary Dwelling Units, Backyard Suites and Tiny Homes. This grant program was launched in August 2024. Up to \$20,000 in additional funding is available to applicants that include universal design features to improve accessibility of the unit.

### **Action: Investigate ways to improve accessibility when renovating or upgrading existing City-owned affordable housing units. On Track**

The City received funding from the Government of NL to convert a two-bedroom ground floor home into a fully accessible unit. This will be finished by quarter 3 of 2025. In addition, as units become vacant, the City assesses ways to improve accessibility of the unit if feasible. The City continues to explore funding opportunities to improve accessibility of its affordable housing units.

### **Action: Ensure newly constructed City-owned affordable housing units include accessible units. On Track**

The City did not construct any new affordable housing units in 2024.

### **Action: Investigate and communicate funding opportunities to improve accessibility of affordable housing units in St. John's. On Track**

The City continues to explore funding opportunities from all levels of government and share information with all of our partners. The City held four in-person public events related to affordable housing education, the City's Affordable Housing Strategy, and grants and initiatives. Over 200 people were engaged through these events. Accessibility was one of many topics discussed.

### **Action: Consider requests to improve accessibility from tenants. On Track**

All accessibility improvement requests for City owned units are considered. In 2024, requests for increased lighting in common spaces and grab bars were completed where possible.

## **Goal:** Improve accessibility of City facilities

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### **Action: Investigate opportunities to improve accessibility in existing City facilities.**

#### **On Track**

Creating safe and accessible facilities is a priority. Where possible, CSA B651 Accessibility Design Standards are applied. In 2024, repairs, replacements, and new installations of accessibility enhancers, including automatic door openers, accessible sinks, lever-style door handles, grab bars, elevators, railings, and change tables were completed. LED lighting upgrades which enhance accessibility and energy efficiency goals were completed in 16 facilities. Fourteen automated door openers were repaired or replaced and installed. Quidi Vidi Boat House accessibility improvements to parking area and nearby pedestrian routes was completed. To determine where additional accessibility improvements may be made, Facility Engineering's Building Condition Assessments now include high level accessibility reviews of stairs, lighting, wayfinding and signage, door openers, change tables, and washrooms. Findings are reported to the Accessibility Facilitator and Facility Managers for consideration. Staff continue to investigate ways to improve accessibility within existing budgets and through external funding opportunities.

### **Action: Investigate opportunities to improve accessibility in new City facilities.**

#### **On Track**

New facility engineering project designs aim to create inclusive, accessible and functional spaces for all. CSA B651 Accessible Design for the Built Environment standards have been included in 3 new facility engineering projects. These standards provide specific accessibility guidance which often supplement, meet or exceed the accessibility standards of the National Building Code and will be applied in upcoming infrastructure projects for 2025 and 2026. Other actions contributing to improving facility accessibility includes incorporating gender-neutral, accessible changing spaces, where applicable, building two new accessible outdoor washroom facilities and using LED interior and exterior lighting in all new builds.

## **Goal:** Improve accessibility of parks, playgrounds and community gardens

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### **Action: Improve accessibility of community gardens owned and operated by the City. On Track**

Accessible gardening tools were purchased for City-owned and managed community gardens at the Paul Reynolds Community Centre, Victoria Park and for the new H.G.R. Mews Community Garden when it opens. The new H.G.R. Mews Community Garden has an accessible path and partially paved surface to improve accessibility of the garden. This garden also has three different garden bed heights to accommodate different heights and abilities. In addition, two wheelchair accessible beds will be purchased prior to the garden opening with grant funding from Trades NL. Southlands and Shea Heights Community Centres received new raised garden beds funded by the Conservation Corps, Growing Through the Ages Program. Accessibility was prioritized by installing the beds at accessible locations and reducing a curb to improve accessibility of the route from the parking lot. A Guide for Community Gardens on City-Owned Land is being updated and will include an appendix for creating accessible and inclusive community gardens. Improving accessibility of the path to the community garden at the Paul Reynolds Community Centre is being explored as part of the shared-use path (SUP) design in this area.

### **Action: Investigate funding opportunities to improve accessibility at community gardens. On Track**

The City purchased accessible garden tools for 3 City-owned and managed community gardens, funded in part by a Trades NL Community Grassroots Grant. Remaining funding will be used to purchase 2 accessible garden beds for the new H.G.R. Mews Community Garden. Staff continue to seek and apply for funding opportunities to improve accessibility at community gardens. New raised garden beds, funded by the Conservation Corps, Growing Through the Ages Program were installed at Shea Heights and Southlands Community Centres.

### **Action: Increase the amount of accessible equipment available in parks and playgrounds. On Track**

Galway Village Green is the City's newest inclusive playground constructed using universal design principles. Six new accessible swings, funded in part by Government of Canada's Enabling Accessibility Fund, were installed at City playgrounds. Eight new accessible rest areas designed based on CSA Accessible Rest Area standards and funded by a Provincial Accessibility Grant were installed at Bidgood Park and Rotary Park. The design for these accessible rest areas was also used at locations along the new shared-use path. An additional provincial accessibility grant was secured to install playground communication boards in approximately 20 locations. These boards provide an alternate form of communication for people who speak English as a second language, are learning to speak or who do not communicate vocally. Installation is anticipated for spring 2025. A beach access mat and storage reel were donated by Rotary Club of St. John's in 2024 for Rotary Park. The mat will be installed seasonally going forward. Plans are underway to replace the playground surface at Bowring Park and include more accessible play equipment. As part of the City's commitment, any new playground equipment purchases will include accessible and inclusive design, where possible. Staff continue to investigate and apply for funding opportunities to increase the availability of accessible and inclusive equipment in parks and playgrounds.

## Goal: Improve accessibility of pedestrian routes

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### Action: Implement annual crosswalk safety improvement program. **Complete**

More than 12 crosswalks were improved in 2024. Improvements include accessible curb ramps, curb extensions, rapid-flashing beacons, improved signage and/or sightline improvements. Crosswalk locations include:

- Waterford Bridge Road Bowring Park Crosswalks (Bowring Park Rd)
- Waterford Bridge Road Bowring Park Crosswalks (Park Rd)
- Cornwall Ave at 18th Street
- Harvey Road at Civic #34 (Paramont Building)
- Duckworth St at Bates Hill
- Larkhall at school
- Water Street at Queens Cove
- Newtown at Kelly's Brook Trail
- Elizabeth Ave at Clarke Place
- Elizabeth Ave at Halliday Place
- Bonaventure Ave at Kelly's Brook Trail
- Duckworth Street at Cavendish Square

### Action: Improve accessibility of sidewalks. **On Track**

Sidewalk accessibility improvements are ongoing via new capital works projects, the street rehabilitation program, the annual infill program and ongoing sidewalk maintenance. Improvements align with the City of St. John's, Construction Specification Book and include accessibility features such as the installation of accessible curb ramps, tactile warnings, reduced slopes, accessible concrete pads at bus shelters, wide level surfaces, and accessible pedestrian signals, where possible. Five new intersections were equipped with accessible pedestrian signals. 2024 large scale projects where sidewalk accessibility has been improved included Elizabeth Avenue, Major's Path and Canada Drive. All new projects consider accessibility in the design and construction phases, wherever possible.

### Action: Improve accessibility of trails. **Behind**

Accessibility upgrades of the City's trail network is a priority and improvements are ongoing when maintenance and upgrades are required, where possible. The City is committed to expanding its shared-use path (SUP) network which are wide, level, paved or compacted gravel trails accessible for people of all ages and abilities. At the end of 2024, approximately 18 kilometers of SUPs have been developed and an additional 11 kilometers are being designed and constructed. Some SUP construction is behind schedule but is progressing. Additional trail areas at Bidgood Park, Rotary Park and trail connections around Canada Games facilities were recently upgraded with wider, level and hard packed gravel surfaces. New wayfinding signage was installed along Rotary Park trails at key decision points. New accessible rest areas were installed along park trails at Bidgood Park, Rotary Park and SUPs. The new accessible rest area design will be a standard addition to parks and trails moving forward where possible.

## **Goal:** Improve accessibility of bus stops

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### **Action: Review new and existing bus stop locations in relation to trails, crosswalks and curb cuts. On Track**

This will be complete when the Route 10 is designated as a wheelchair accessible route in June, 2025. As new wheelchair accessible routes are added, this will be part of the planning.

### **Action: Increase the number of bus shelters in the City. On Track**

The goal for 2024 was to install shelters in 6 new locations for a total of 76 shelters. By the end of December, 5 shelters were installed in new locations for a total of 75 bus shelters in the City. These were installed at:

- Frecker Drive near Cowan United Church
- Torbay Road at Fall River Plaza
- Gloucester Street opposite Alice Drive
- 77 Charter Avenue
- Majors Path near Airport Road

A new target for 2025 has been set to add an additional 6 bus shelters, for a total of 81.

## Information and Communication

**Goal:** Investigate opportunities to improve how the City receives feedback and responds to accessibility concerns

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**Action: Investigate the resident satisfaction survey's capacity to include accessibility feedback. Complete**

Discussions took place with Healthy City and Inclusion Staff regarding potential questions for the 2024 survey. A benchmarking question was added to the survey. 63% of residents agree or strongly agree that the City is accessible.

**Goal:** Increase awareness of accessible and inclusive programs, services and spaces

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**Action: Improve communication of accessibility information related to construction. On Track**

The City actively promoted the use of Subscriptions as a means to receive up to date information about construction and service disruptions through social media as well as through key messages in media events. Further promotions include the development of a new digital advertising campaign. Construction public notices now consistently include accessibility impacts for pedestrians including alternate routes, where applicable. The Construction Specification Book, Development Design Manual, Construction Inspector Checklist and Traffic Control Plan guidelines are being reviewed and updated to align with accessibility best practices from the Canadian Association of Road Safety Professionals.

**Action: Improve awareness of accessibility and inclusion information for parks, playgrounds and facilities. On Track**

Website updates were completed for recreation facilities and parks webpages. A dedicated webpage was developed to outline the locations of inclusive playgrounds and parks that have accessible features. The City's trail webpage links to a Grand Concourse trail mapping tool where trails may be filtered by accessibility. The City's new Trail Explorers program information includes trail difficulty ratings from one with relatively flat, short and easy routes to 5 with steep inclines, long distance and rugged terrains. Facility accessibility summaries were prepared and published in the 2024-2026 Accessibility Plan. Event promotions include facility accessibility information which is communicated through public notices, including media releases and social media.

### **Action: Improve accessible parking information on the City’s website. Complete**

Parking Services Staff consulted Healthy City and Inclusion Staff, the Inclusion Advisory Committee and the Accessible Parking Working Group regarding the development of a dedicated accessible parking webpage. Content includes information about: accessible parking types, an interactive map of locations, special event accessible parking, enforcement, reporting violations, winter parking impacts, and frequently asked questions.

### **Action: Investigate the development of an online map identifying accessible parking spaces managed by the City. Complete**

Parking Staff consulted with the Inclusion Advisory Committee, Accessible Parking Working Group, Healthy City and Inclusion Staff and Staff from Land Information Systems to investigate if an online map could be developed. Development of the map proceeded.

### **Action: Implement an interactive pay station and paid parking map for the public on the city website showing paid parking locations. Complete**

An interactive parking map highlighting the locations of accessible on-street parking spaces and pay stations was developed and published on the City’s Parking webpage.

## **Goal: Improve accessibility of information shared with the public**

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### **Action: Standardize the use of accessible formats in City information and communication. On Track**

Curb It St. John’s and Robin Hood Bay websites were updated to meet Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, (WCAG) 2.1 AA. The Inclusion Advisory Committee (IAC) and Healthy City and Inclusion Staff were consulted to ensure principles of accessibility and inclusion were reflected in the newly updated Corporate Brand Standards. City staff are working to improve consistent application of plain language principles and Clear Print Guidelines in public communication. In 2024, an inventory of the City’s Pocket Talker assistive hearing devices was completed and 4 new devices were purchased. As of 2024, all City operated recreation facilities and Access Centre are now equipped with assistive hearing devices to support customer service. A Meeting Owl was purchased to improve accessibility of virtual and in-person hybrid meetings for the IAC and other meetings as required. Alternative text or image descriptions are now consistently used on the City’s social media platforms. Communications staff use accessibility tools and checkers to improve accessibility of information developed in Adobe Suite and Microsoft suite of products. Tools and information to improve accessibility in communication are available for staff on the City’s Intranet. The Communications Division plans to evaluate existing content and develop solutions to improve access and create awareness for these resources in 2025. Staff from the Communications Division have been participated in training and learning opportunities for accessible communication and are actively applying their knowledge in their work.

**Action: Investigate procedures to collect and record communication needs of those accessing City programs and services. On Track**

Preliminary discussions with Privacy and IT staff determined that a solution is not readily available and further investigation such as a jurisdictional scan is required. Many City departments use different data software programs and communicate with the public for different purposes. It was determined that there is no current single data storage solution that would be able to be accessed by multiple departments. City staff are currently addressing alternate format requests on a case-by-case basis.

**Action: Improve the accessibility of information communicated to public transit users. Behind**

The implementation of an automated on board stop announcement system which will improve accessibility on all Metrobus routes is behind, but progress is continuing. Funding for the system was secured, an RFP was developed and issued and a contract was awarded in February 2025 to Strategic Mapping Inc. Metrobus has also improved accessibility of information for riders by creating an accessibility quick access menu on the Metrobus website. This menu creates easier access to information such as wheelchair accessible routes, GoBus Accessible Transit, the 2024-2026 City of St. John's Accessibility Plan, the new Metrobus Accessibility Committee and other accessibility and inclusion information including related policies and procedures.



# Procurement

**Goal:** Improve accessibility considerations in procurement processes

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**Action: Ensure para-transit contracts consider accessibility and inclusion implications in service standards. Complete**

Recent contracts for para-transit service provider and eligibility assessment services were reviewed by staff. The language was revised to ensure accessibility and inclusion considerations were clearly stated in contract requirements.

**Action: Update language used in procurement processes to ensure accessibility is considered in purchasing goods and services. Overdue**

Staff have reviewed and included process language in the procurement training material in Reach 360. Once training is complete, staff will be required to consider inclusion and accessibility in the scope of their procurement projects. Staff have completed an initial review of other jurisdictions and are in the process of determining if additional language is required in the City's current purchasing templates.

**Action: Update language used in bus procurement to require forward facing wheelchair securing equipment. Complete**

The 8 buses recently purchased have forward facing wheelchair securing systems as well as the 8 buses to be received late 2025. Customer feedback will be monitored.

**Action: Ensure new buses procured are wheelchair accessible. Complete**

All buses purchased since 2010 are wheelchair accessible and is a standard requirement for all buses procured in the future.

# Accommodations

**Goal:** Investigate strategies to improve accessibility accommodations

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**Action: Review and update attendant pass guidelines. On Track**

A jurisdictional scan of attendant pass guidelines from municipalities across Canada is complete. Based on this information, areas of improvement for the attendant pass holder brochure and internal procedures have been updated. Gaps in attendant pass guidelines for participating venues have also been identified. Venues have their own policies regarding Attendant Pass usage that must be adhered to but City staff will make suggestions for improving attendant pass holder experience.

**Action: Develop a process for sharing attendant pass guidelines with participating organizations. On Track**

An inventory of participating organizations has been updated. Attendant Pass guidelines for pass holders are updated and Attendant Pass guidelines for participating venues are being developed. Both sets of guidelines will be distributed in 2025.

**Action: Develop an Accessibility Accommodations Policy. On Track**

Staff completed a jurisdictional scan of similar accommodation policies and completed an initial inventory of City programs and services that have existing accommodations. A policy note requesting approval to proceed was reviewed and approved by the Corporate Policy Committee. This policy is currently being drafted by Healthy City and Inclusion Staff and the Office of the City Clerk.

**Action: Develop procedures to ensure accessibility accommodation offers are communicated when inviting the public to participate in programs, services, and events. On Track**

The City developed a statement which will be used as an active offer for accessibility accommodations in communications. It states "The City of St. John's strives to create accessible and inclusive programs and services where possible. For accommodation requests, or to provide feedback related to accessibility and inclusion, please call or email". The appropriate staff contact information is included. Staff are working to ensure the accommodation offer is consistently used in communications which invite the public to participate in a program or event.

# Employment

**Goal:** Investigate best practices in equity, diversity, and inclusion in human resources policy and procedures

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**Action: Refine and develop practices to support equity, diversity and inclusion in City employment. On Track**

A new employee online learning platform, Reach 360, was launched. Healthy City and Inclusion Staff were consulted regarding accessibility and inclusion considerations in content development. Reach 360 offers a user-friendly interface, multilingual option, is compatible with assistive technologies, closed captioning and read aloud features, flexibility of where and when learning takes place and accommodates different learning styles. All employment applicant requests for accommodations (alternate formats, extended test times, private spaces) received during position selection processes were accommodated. Employment webpage improvements for screen reader capability is being investigated. Job postings have been reviewed to ensure Clear Print Guidelines are reflected and updates will take place early in 2025. A new Psychological Wellness Committee was established. Committee initiatives include offering lunch and learns and courses on topics that improve employee mental wellness. Staff are investigating ways to create and support employment opportunities for individuals with intellectual disabilities. Staff reviewed the Accessibility Standards Canada, Employment Standard, released in December 2024, to identify opportunities for improving equitable practices and found that many City policies and systems align with its recommendations.

**Action: Review the current City Employment Equity Policy and make recommendations for updates, where applicable. Complete**

The Employment Equity Policy was updated and approved by Council. The updates modernize the policy, which has not been revised since 1994, to align with current legislation and use more inclusive, general language. The updated policy was developed in consultation with legal experts and supporting research.