

City of St. John's

Draft 2027-2029 Accessibility Plan

This document is available in alternate format on request

ST. JOHN'S

Land Acknowledgement

We respectfully acknowledge the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, of which the City of St. John's is the capital City, as the ancestral homelands of the Beothuk. Today these lands are home to a diverse population of Indigenous, and other peoples. We would also like to acknowledge with respect, the diverse histories and cultures of the Mi'kmaq, Innu, Inuit and Southern Inuit of this Province.

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Commitment to Accessibility

The City of St. John's and Metrobus are 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.

Definitions

The following terms are defined in relation to this Accessibility Plan to improve understanding of its content.

Accessibility: the extent to which a person can access and use programs, services, goods and spaces independently.

Accessibility Plan: a document that addresses how to prevent, identify and remove barriers in policy, programs, practices and services.

Accessibility Standard: the necessary accessibility requirements established under the Provincial Accessibility Act.

Accommodation: an action taken to reduce or remove a barrier preventing or limiting access.

Barrier: anything that prevents a person from participating in society, such as a physical barrier, architectural barrier, information or communication barrier, attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, or a barrier established or extended by an Act, regulations, a policy or a practice.

Built Environment: buildings, parks, trails, playgrounds, streets, sidewalks, sport fields, bus shelters, bus stops, built and/or maintained by the City of St. John's or Metrobus.

Disability: a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment or a functional limitation that is permanent, temporary or episodic in nature that, in interaction with a barrier, prevents a person from fully participating in society.

Priority Area: area of operation in public service.

Programs: an activity or activities offered by the City or Metrobus that improve the wellbeing of residents, visitors, businesses and newcomers.

Public Body: specific to the City of St. John's, a municipality established by the [City of St. John's Act](#).

Services: work done by the City or Metrobus that benefits others.

About this Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

This draft plan is presented for public engagement. The City is seeking feedback about the strengths of the plan and if there are gaps or missing priorities. A What We Heard document summarizing the feedback will be published and will be used to finalize the plan by the end of 2026.

The multi-year Accessibility Plan guides the City and Metrobus to improve accessibility of programs, services, policies and public spaces over the next three years. It demonstrates our commitment to accessibility and creates awareness about our efforts to become more accessible and inclusive.

The Accessibility Plan is a working document. This means that goals and actions may change based on the needs of the community, new ways of doing things, and the development of Provincial Accessibility Regulations.

The commitments in this plan were made with the guiding principle of “nothing about us, without us and are based on advice and recommendations of the Inclusion Advisory Committee, Metrobus Accessibility Committee, feedback from previous accessibility planning engagement and staff.

The City and Metrobus monitor best practices and national and international accessibility standards to improve accessibility. [Accessibility Standards Canada](#) (ASC) is an accredited standards development organization that influences accessibility across federally regulated entities. ASC’s seven (7) priority areas are reviewed regularly and incorporated into the goals and actions of this plan.

Learn more about Accessibility Standards Canada [Priority Areas](#):

- [Employment](#)
- [Built environment](#)
- [Information and Communication Technologies \(ICT\)](#)
- [Communication \(other than ICT\)](#)
- [Procurement of goods, services, and facilities](#)
- [Design and delivery of programs and services](#)
- [Transportation](#)

Overview of the Accessibility Act

The Newfoundland and Labrador [Accessibility Act](#) was introduced into legislation on December 3, 2021. It outlines priority areas where barriers often exist that impact equitable participation in society.

The Act provides the Province with the authority to develop accessibility regulations and standards; establish inspection and compliance powers to ensure requirements are met and requires that public bodies develop and update multi-year accessibility plans.

As of the date of publication, no accessibility standards are established. However, as accessibility standards are legislated, this plan will be updated to ensure compliance.

The City understands the importance of improving accessibility in public services and continues to participate in opportunities to contribute to the development of provincial accessibility standards.

Since 2022, the City's Accessibility Facilitator has been a member of the [Provincial Accessibility Standards Advisory Board](#) (The Board) and is the current Vice Chair. The Accessibility Facilitator was also appointed as Lead of the Accessible Customer Service Standard Development Committee, responsible for providing The Board with recommendations for the province's first accessibility standard.

Demographics

A significant and growing part of the Canadian population identify as having a disability. In 2022, 27% of Canadians reported living with one or more disabilities. In Newfoundland and Labrador and the St. John's Metropolitan Area, both rates were higher at 31%. This reflects an increase of approximately 7 percentage points since 2017, driven largely by increases in mental health, pain, and vision-related disabilities.

Area	2017	2022	Change
Canada	22.3%	27%	+4.7
Newfoundland and Labrador	24%	31%	+7.0
St. John's CMA	24%	31%	+7.0

Disability is experienced in many ways. It may be visible or invisible, permanent, temporary or episodic and exists across all ages, backgrounds, and lived experiences.

With more than one-third of residents living with a disability, and the number expected to rise as the population ages, accessibility must remain a key consideration in the design and delivery of our plans, programs, services, and spaces.

Statistical Sources

[The Canadian Survey on Disability 2022 data](#)

[Type of disability for persons with disabilities aged 15 years and over, by age group and gender Canada, Newfoundland and Labrador 2022 and 2017](#)

[Persons with and without disabilities aged 15 years and over, census metropolitan areas](#)

Overview of Municipal Services

Finance and Corporate Services

The Department of Finance and Corporate Services includes divisions which reach across the organization and provide strategic and corporate services to enhance the City's accountability and operational efficiency. This enhances the ability of those departments who primarily provide front line services to residents to meet their mandates. The department is responsible for:

- the City's annual budget
- audited financial statements
- assessment and taxation
- information technology
- organizational performance and strategy
- supply chain
- citizen services (Access 311)

Public Works

The Department of Public Works offers important services such as:

- garbage and recycling collection
- waste management, including the Robin Hood Bay Landfill
- snow removal
- ice control
- road upkeep
- water and wastewater services and treatment facilities
- building maintenance
- fleet maintenance
- parks, playgrounds, trails and open spaces
- outdoor sports facilities
- public trees

Community Services

The Department of Community Services provides programs and services in the community to improve quality of life and wellbeing for residents, newcomers and visitors. Community Services works with community partners to develop solutions to the economic and social challenges facing the City of St. John's. Programs and services are offered through the divisions of:

- Recreation
- Tourism, Culture and Business Growth
- Housing
- Animal Services

Planning, Engineering and Regulatory Services

The Department of Planning, Engineering and Regulatory Services plays an important role in promoting responsible growth, maintaining infrastructure integrity, and preserving the well-being of our community. This department combines the expertise of planners, engineers and regulatory professionals to guide and support development projects, capital projects, infrastructure maintenance and compliance with regulations.

Office of the City Manager

The Office of the City Manager provides connection between the elected officials and the City's administrative function. Led by the City Manager, this department assists Council in implementing its vision, goals and decisions in a timely manner. The Office of the City Manager also directly oversees:

- Communications
- Legal Services
- City Clerk's Office
- Internal Audit
- St. John's Regional Fire Services
- Human Resources

Metrobus Public Transit

City Council appoints the St. John's Transportation Commission to oversee the operations of Metrobus which provides the City's public transit service, as well as the City's para transit service, GoBus.

Advancing Accessibility and Removing Barriers

The City and Metrobus have considered accessibility for many years, however the [2024-2026 Accessibility Plan](#) was the first formal plan developed. It outlines existing accessibility measures to improve accessibility in municipal programs, services and built environments. It also outlines the City's commitments to improve accessibility during this period. Annual reports are provided to Council to demonstrate progress and challenges and are available [online](#).

Through continued investment, planning, engagement, and the application of best practices, we are committed to reducing, removing, and preventing barriers while fostering a more accessible and inclusive community for all.

As Provincial Accessibility Regulations are established, the City will work to ensure compliance. In the meantime, we continue to engage with the public and our advisory committees to identify opportunities for improvement and to advance accessibility within existing regulatory requirements.

We recognize that accessibility is an ongoing journey and that challenges remain related to older public buildings, aging transportation infrastructure, the City's natural terrain, and temporary barriers created by winter conditions. The City and Metrobus are committed to making steady progress toward greater accessibility while also improving a wide range of municipal services and operations. Achieving meaningful and lasting change requires thoughtful planning, continued investment, and time.

While challenges remain, we're raising awareness about the practices the City and Metrobus have adopted to improve accessibility, including:

- Meeting regularly with the Inclusion Advisory Committee and Metrobus Accessibility Committee.
- Applying Canadian Standards Association (CSA) Built Environment Design Standards where feasible.
- Applying an accessibility lens in planning the programs, service and spaces we operate.

- The City's website meets Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.
- Promoting accessibility, inclusion, and disability awareness through City communications.
- Installing Accessible Pedestrian Signals at all new intersections and replacing others existing intersections annually.
- Installing Tactile Walking Surface Indicators at all new and retrofitted pedestrian crossings.
- Installing new LED lighting in public buildings and spaces.
- Adding accessible and inclusive playground equipment annually.
- Snow clearing 193 km of City sidewalks.
- Advancing sidewalk maintenance to include repair of sidewalk damage and remove accessibility barriers.
- Constructing safer accessible sidewalks through capital works projects.
- Replacing park benches with accessible benches in parks and along pedestrian routes.
- Adding assistive hearing devices at service counters.
- Offering adapted swim lessons and sensory-friendly swims.
- Providing resources and staff support for participants requiring accommodations in recreation programs.
- Replacing aging Metrobus fleet with low floor accessible buses.
- Offering public paratransit and improving service delivery standards.
- Accommodating and supporting potential and existing employees with disabilities to access and maintain meaningful employment.
- Providing accommodations to improve access to programs, services and spaces where feasible.

Learn more about [City of St. John's Accessibility](#) and [Metrobus Accessibility](#) online.

2027-2029 Goals and Actions

35 goals and 92 actions have been developed to reduce barriers and improve accessibility across 7 priority areas. Each priority area is defined and included in the following sections. Goals are in bold font and the actions planned to help achieve progress are listed below each goal.

Design and Delivery of Programs and Services

We're improving accessibility in how we design and deliver City Programs and Services so that more people can participate. Learn more about the goals and actions we have planned to further improve programs and services.

Improve accessibility of public engagement

- Review and update public engagement policy, processes, training and framework

Improve accessibility of recreation programs

- Develop a volunteer services framework and include an accessibility lens
- Develop social story for swimming programs/lessons
- Investigate opportunities to increase access to recreation for youth with disabilities
- Review Recreation Division procedures for accessibility improvements
- Develop facility access guides for recreation community centres
- Improve promotion of existing inclusive and accessible recreation programs and services

Improve training and learning tools to enhance accessibility and disability awareness

- Develop and implement a corporate accessibility and inclusion orientation

Prioritize accessibility in planning

- Develop an Equity Lens to inform municipal decision and policy making
- Review opportunities to improve accessibility through work being completed in other City-led plans and strategies

Review emergency management procedures with an accessibility lens

- Review emergency management plans to ensure procedures include safety measures for persons with disabilities

Review municipal election procedures with an accessibility lens

- Develop a new Municipal Election Guide and include an accessibility lens
- Improve communication about election accessibility features
- Investigate ways to improve accessibility to vote by mail or in person voting

Built Environment

We're working to remove accessibility barriers and build accessible public spaces for everyone. Learn more about the goals and actions we have planned to further improve built environments.

Improve access to accessible parking

- Review winter maintenance practices for on-street parking areas in the downtown Business District and explore opportunities to improve access to accessible parking spaces where practical
- Support staff awareness of accessibility considerations when planning and undertaking winter maintenance activities
- Investigate the feasibility of using parking enforcement to improve access to accessible parking

Improve accessibility of City buildings

- Train applicable City staff in Building Accessibility Professional Certification
- Inventory and prioritize buildings to assess for accessibility
- Complete assessments, where feasible
- Investigate funding opportunities to implement recommendations from accessibility assessments

Improve accessibility in City-owned housing

- Investigate funding opportunities to improve accessibility of City-owned housing units
- Assess City-owned housing units for accessibility improvements as they become vacant

Explore ways to improve accessibility standards in built environments

- Require universal design and accessibility as key considerations for the City's land disposition program
- Investigate opportunities to implement higher accessibility standards for City infrastructure

Improve accessibility of parks, sports fields, and playgrounds

- Improve playground asset management
- Investigate opportunities to improve accessibility of Victoria Park Community Garden
- Assess where accessibility improvements can be made in City parks and implement improvements, where feasible
- Assess where accessibility improvements can be made in City sports fields and implement improvements, where feasible
- Construct a new greenhouse in Bowring Park with accessible design considerations
- Assess where accessibility improvements can be made in City playgrounds and implement improvements, where feasible

Improve pedestrian accessibility

- Expand the Shared Use Path Network
- Increase the number of Accessible Pedestrian Signals at intersections
- Assess City trails and implement accessibility improvements, where feasible
- Incorporate accessibility considerations into sidewalk maintenance and repair activities
- Review maintenance and construction procedures to determine if pedestrian accessibility can be improved

Improve accessibility of public washrooms

- Design and construct new accessible washrooms for Rotary Park
- Investigate solutions for a permanent accessible public washroom within the Downtown Pedestrian Mall
- Explore opportunities to improve accessibility of public washrooms and make improvements where feasible

Public Transportation

Our public and paratransit services make it easier to get around our City safely. Learn more about the goals and actions we have planned to further improve access to public transportation.

Expand transit fleet

- Explore opportunities to expand and diversify the GoBus fleet
- Replace non-accessible buses with new wheelchair accessible buses

Improve accessibility of Metrobuses

- Increase the number of Quantum Wheelchair Securement Systems available on buses

Improve service delivery standards

- Complete a jurisdictional review of paratransit services to identify opportunities to improve efficiency and customer service
- Review the paratransit contract to identify areas to improve service delivery
- Review the transit assessment procedure to ensure accessibility
- Consult with community organizations to learn more about transit needs of persons with disabilities

Strengthen digital accessibility

- Review transit apps for accessibility improvements
- Review the Metrobus website and make accessibility improvements

Review and develop accessible communication practices

- Standardize procedures for hosting accessible meetings
- Inventory and prioritize public documents to improve accessibility
- Ensure up to date new rider information and resources are communicated to new and current riders
- Review and update GoBus App resources to ensure riders can access, understand and use the GoBus app

Improve accessibility of bus routes and bus stops

- Implement accessibility enhancements identified in the new bus stop design standards and evaluate
- Investigate ways to improve access to bus stops
- Investigate opportunities to improve accessibility of transit routes

Investigate ways to increase ridership of persons with disabilities on Metrobus

- Review the travel training program and develop strategies to increase participation
- Create resources that help community organizations connect people with disabilities to public transit services and supports

Information and Communication

We're making information easy to access and understand. Learn more about the goals and actions we have planned to further improve the information we communicate.

Create awareness about the importance of accessibility in the community

- Expand development of Universal Design for Accessible and Inclusive Housing resources
- Share information about City accessibility initiatives using marketing tools
- Identify and promote public awareness campaigns about accessibility in consultation with the Inclusion Advisory Committee

Develop standard practices for internal and external communication with staff and the public

- Develop corporate accessible communication policy and procedures
- Develop employee training for accessible communication practices

Strengthen digital accessibility

- Improve accessibility of forms and applications
- Investigate options to increase the amount of online services
- Investigate technology to support accessible visitor services
- Develop standardized procedures for hosting hybrid meetings

Improve accessibility of emergency related information and communication

- Review and update the crisis communication plan to ensure accessible communication during emergencies
- Develop accessible emergency management information using universally recognized symbols to support understanding
- Create a new database for communication during emergencies

Improve facility accessibility through signage

- Align corporate signage with City brand standards

Improve website accessibility

- Ensure that information communicated on the City's website is accessible, understandable, and usable

Improve accessibility of forms and documents

- Identify and prioritize forms and documents to review and update to improve accessibility

Employment

The City is an equal opportunity employer. We are committed to supporting employees to reach their potential. Learn more about the goals and actions we have planned to further improve employment.

Improve accessibility of employee training

- Review staff training and learning resources with an accessibility lens
- Review four REACH 360 training and learning courses per year for accessibility improvements

Improve workplace accessibility through technology

- Communicate important staff information using accessible tools and formats

Review and improve accessibility of recruitment practices

- Consult with the NJOYN recruitment software provider to investigate accessibility improvements
- Promote accommodation tools such as use of assistive devices in recruitment

Strengthen workplace inclusion

- Review internal forms and applications with an accessibility lens
- Improve awareness of employee wellness resources
- Complete a jurisdictional review of how other municipalities collect and use data about persons with disabilities
- Provide accessible technology and equipment to support employees in their roles

Procurement

We're working to ensure that the goods and services we purchase are accessible to those who use them. Learn more about the goals and actions we have planned to further improve accessibility through procurement.

Build procurement accessibility knowledge and capacity

- Develop inclusive and accessible procurement practices and resources
- Establish internal subject matter support for accessibility related procurement
- Train relevant staff in accessible procurement practices

Improve accessibility of procurement processes for suppliers

- Provide clear instructions on requesting accommodations during procurement processes
- Identify opportunities to use accessible procurement documents and electronic formats

Investigate opportunities to integrate accessibility into procurement policies and solicitation documents

- Require departments to consider accessibility during the planning stage and document how accessibility was addressed
- Identify opportunities to embed accessibility considerations into procurement planning, specifications, evaluation criteria, and contract requirements where applicable
- Identify opportunities to include accessibility requirements in templates for RFPs, tenders, and RFQs.
- Identify opportunities to include accessibility standards (i.e. applicable accessibility legislation, recognized standards, or functional accessibility requirements) when procuring goods, services, facilities, or technology.

Accommodations

The City understands that not everyone can access municipal programs, services and spaces in the same way. We will make every reasonable effort to provide accommodations that supports equitable access. Learn more about the goals and actions we have planned to further improve accessibility through accommodations.

Finalize and pilot the Accessible Accommodations Policy

- Develop and implement employee training and awareness
- Evaluate effectiveness through usage data and user feedback and make recommendations

Accessibility Feedback for the City

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.

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.

- Call 311 or 1 709 754 2489 (CITY) and select the category of your accessibility concern or stay on the line to be directed to a customer service representative
- Online at StJohns.ca, select "[Contact Us](#)" under the Your Government tab to submit a service request
- Email Access@StJohns.ca with your feedback or request
- Mail Access St. John's P.O. Box 908, St. John's, NL A1C 5M2
- In person at Access St. John's inside City Hall, 10 New Gower Street

Accessibility Feedback for Metrobus

For accessibility feedback related to public transportation, contact Metrobus.

- Call 1 709 570 2020 to speak to administrative staff
- Online at www.metrobus.com select the Online Click to Chat option or complete the [Customer Feedback Form](#) online
- Email accessibility@metrobus.com with your feedback or request
- In person at 25 Messenger Drive, St. John's, NL

Please Note: Metrobus Route 10 and 16 services the Metrobus Building. Riders must tell the driver that they need to go to the Metrobus building located on Messenger Drive. When leaving the Metrobus building, riders must tell the information services staff to request the next available bus to stop at the bus stop just outside the building.

Evaluation

The City and Metrobus are building a community that is inclusive, diverse and accessible. We are committed to ensuring everyone can participate and benefit from our programs, service and spaces.

The City and Metrobus will provide an annual progress report to Council, the Inclusion Advisory Committee and the Metrobus Accessibility Committee. These reports are published online and available for anyone interested.

Our three-year Accessibility Plan represents a meaningful investment in creating a more accessible and inclusive community now and in the future. We are committed to implementing best practices, reducing barriers, and meeting provincial accessibility standards as they evolve. The lived experiences and feedback of people most affected by accessibility barriers are essential to this work and will help guide our ongoing efforts and priorities.

Together we will continue to create a more accessible and inclusive community that benefits everyone.

Contact Us

For more information about this Draft 2027-2029 Accessibility Plan or accessibility in City of St. John's municipal operations, [contact Council](#) or contact our Accessibility and Inclusion Facilitator at 709 576 4450 or inclusion@stjohns.ca.