

OUR CITY. OUR FUTURE.

What We Heard

Accessibility Plan



October 2023

ST. JOHN'S

Disclaimer

- This document provides a summary of what was heard from participants during this engagement process. It is not meant to reflect the specific details of each submission word-for-word, although attempts have been made to do so when possible.
- The City produces a What We Heard document for every city-led public engagement project. This collected commentary is shared with the community to ensure we heard you correctly.
- The City protects the privacy of those who provide feedback as per Access to Information and Privacy Legislation.
- The full scope of commentary is used by city staff and Council to help inform recommendations and decisions.
- If individuals provided specific examples or information that could potentially be identifiable, it is not included here but is shared with project staff.

Context

- The City is developing an Accessibility Plan, which will outline what we are currently doing to support accessibility and how we will work to remove barriers that prevent persons with visible and invisible disabilities from fully accessing City-operated programs, services, and public spaces.
- In NL, 23.6% of people are living with a disability; this is higher than the national average (22.3%).
- The City's Accessibility Plan will be reviewed annually and updated every three years, as per provincial legislation.

Background

- The City has an [Inclusion Advisory Committee](#) to provide advice and recommendations on matters of inclusion and accessibility as they relate to City Services.
- An Accessibility Working Group, which includes several members of the Inclusion Advisory Committee, was created to assist in the development of the City's Accessibility Plan. Members include persons with disabilities and organizations that represent persons with disabilities.
- The City has implemented a variety of accessibility measures over the years and some of these measures can be reviewed on the [City website](#).
- The City has a strategic direction to be a Connected City, one where people feel connected, have a sense of belonging and are actively engaged in community life.

Public Engagement Plan

Purpose

- To create awareness about current accessibility measures
- To gather feedback about current barriers that exist when accessing City programs, services and public spaces
- To gather ideas about how accessibility could be improved

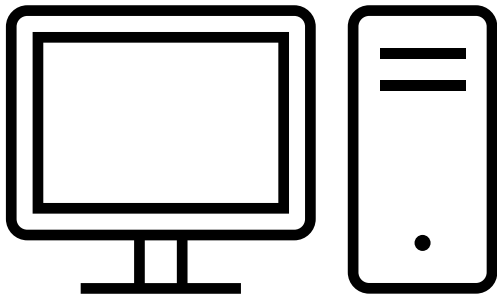
Approach

- Meetings (two in-person and one virtual)
- Public survey
- City Influencers (18-30-year-olds) survey
- City Advisory Committee meetings
- Online tools on [EngageStJohns.ca](https://engagestjohns.ca)
- Email and phone
- Provided organizations with engagement information and alternate ways to provide feedback
- Alternate ways to provide feedback was available upon request

Stakeholders

- City Advisory Committees and Working Groups consulted:
 - Inclusion Advisory Committee
 - Accessibility Working Group
 - Seniors' Advisory Committee
 - Sustainable and Active Mobility Advisory Committee
 - Affordable Housing Working Group
 - Youth Engagement Working Group
 - Built Heritage Experts Panel
- Organizations consulted through the Accessibility Working Group:
 - Autism Society of NL
 - Canadian Mental Health Association
 - Canadian National Institute for the Blind
 - Canadian Hard of Hearing Association NL
 - Coalition of Persons with Disabilities NL
 - Empower NL
 - Inclusion Canada NL
 - NL Association of the Deaf

Engagement and Communications



- [Media release](#) issued on September 5, 2023
- [Project page](#) on EngageStJohns.ca published on September 1, 2023
- Two newsletters to 3,913 registered users and followers of EngageStJohns.ca
- Posts to regular City communications channels including social media, listservs, website
- News stories by VOXM, The Telegram and CBC Morning Show
- Advertising in The Telegram, VOXM website, all City-owned digital signage and posters throughout the community.
- Campaigns were used on social media; 8 Facebook posts, 7 Instagram posts, 8 Twitter (now known as X) posts
 - 3,925 engagements
 - 198,087 impressions

Who Engaged

On EngageStJohns.ca

- Total Visits: 1,460
- Max Visitors Per Day: 181
- **Engaged Visitors** (Posted questions, comments or used the Ideas tool): 12
- **Informed Visitors** (Completed an action on the page): 179
- **Aware Visitors** (Unique visitors): 1,086

Public Sessions

- Virtual Session via Zoom: seven people
- Two In-person Sessions:
 - 21 people attended in total

Email/Phone:

- Seven submissions

City Committee Meetings: Six

Online Ideas Tool and Survey Submissions:

- 34 submissions posted on EngageStJohns.ca
- Public Survey: 338
- City Influencers Survey: 12

What We Heard Highlights (1/2)

- Concerns about accessible parking were expressed by many participants, including the need for more accessible parking throughout the City.
- Barriers related to placement of curb cuts, obstacles on sidewalks such as poles, and the condition of sidewalks with loose pavement or cracks were identified in all engagement activities.
- Many participants expressed concerns with sidewalk snow clearing and snow and ice left at curb cuts from sidewalk and road snow clearing.
- Most stakeholders expressed that construction zones create barriers by not providing alternate accessible routes. It was noted that communication about construction zones and alternate accessible routes is important.
- Barriers related to accessible affordable housing were identified, including the current application process.
- It was expressed by many that accessibility measures such as automatic doors should be in all City buildings, including City non-profit housing, and the need for these features to be well-maintained.

What We Heard Highlights (2/2)

- There were comments related to needing more inclusion workers for City programs and more flexibility in programming. The high cost of accessing programming if an individual must bring their own inclusion worker was mentioned by several participants.
- Many noted that more accessible measures and equipment are needed, such as in parks, playgrounds, and more accessible public washrooms.
- While some had positive comments about the GoBus service, there were several comments about challenges using the service.
- Many expressed ideas about improving the accessibility of public transit, including considerations such as the sidewalks and placement of curb cuts near bus stops, use of benches and bus shelters, and proximity to crosswalks.
- A number of participants noted that consulting with persons with disabilities or subject matter experts in all phases of a project is important to ensure current barriers are addressed and no new barriers are created. Some people expressed that before any project was completed, members of the disability community should be asked to ensure the design of a space, or a service doesn't have barriers.

What We Heard from the Public

The following pages provide an overview of all feedback received from the public about barriers they have experienced with accessing programs, services and public spaces operated by the City of St. John's. It also includes ways barriers could be removed and prevented in the future, and what an accessible City of St. John's means to them.

Barriers Identified

Curb Cuts and Sidewalks

- Curb cuts placed on a hill or at certain angles, such as 45 degrees, are difficult to maneuver and create safety concerns.
- Drainage grates placed at curb cuts
- Signs, poles, and fire hydrants on sidewalks
- Residents placing garbage bins on sidewalks
- Lack of sidewalks in some areas
- Condition and maintenance of sidewalks – cracks and loose stone create hazards

Accessible Parking

- Not enough accessible parking throughout the City, particularly downtown and near pedestrian mall. Some individuals must plan trips around less busy times to use accessible parking
- Lack of enforcement and the time to respond to a complaint submitted through 311 (Access St. John's)
- Lack of easily available information about location of accessible parking and accessible drop-off/pick-up areas.

Barriers Identified

Public Transit (1/3)

- Lack of GoBus reliability. Pickups can be late, causing users to miss appointments, or pickups may be cancelled
- Being picked up by GoBus much earlier than needed. Example was given of an elderly person with vision loss being picked up two hours before an event and having to wait alone before and after the event.
- GoBus providing accessible taxis when a bus is unavailable. It was felt that the accessible taxis do not offer the same level of accessibility as GoBus vehicles.

Public Transit (2/3)

- Lack of benches near some bus stops. Bus stop on Topsail Road near Avalon Terrace entrance was an example.
- Lack of connection from accessible bus routes to accessible trails
- Distance between bus stops to crosswalks and availability of curb cuts near bus stops
- Lack of public transit late at night. This limits the activities and jobs individuals can access
- Limited number of bus arrivals
- Buses kneeling where there is no curb, making it still too high to get on and off the bus

Barriers Identified

Public Transit (3/3)

- Language used on GoBus app when booking rides is not always clear when English is not a first language, including ASL users. An example given was the use of the word “pending” for ride status.
- Drivers not understanding the needs of riders and not meeting accessibility needs
- Lack of driver knowledge about the harness system
- Not enough time given by bus drivers for those using wheelchairs or with mobility disabilities to exit the bus

Accessible Washrooms

- Need more accessible public washrooms, particularly downtown
- Washrooms at Bannerman Park and Bowring Park need to be more accessible
- More older child/adult change rooms and tables are needed
- The overall design of public washrooms can create challenges, such as the placement of soap and paper towel dispensers. It was noted that many washrooms have grab bars installed incorrectly.

Barriers Identified

City Programs (1/2)

- Lack of ASL support for those attending City programs
- Not enough inclusion workers
- Cost of requiring an additional aide for a child attending a program, making it too costly
- Need more programs for those with autism
- Need more flexibility in providing exceptions to City programming age limits. For example, allowing seniors to bring an adult dependent to a seniors' event.

City Programs (2/2)

- Lack of programs for teens or older adults with complex disabilities
- Need more types of programs overall
- Not all programs or areas are fully accessible to those in a wheelchair or using mobility aids. The community garden at Paul Reynolds was given as an example.
- Lack of awareness or information about programs and supports for those with disabilities

Barriers Identified

Snow Clearing & Salting (1/2)

- Lack of sidewalk clearing or lack of timely sidewalk clearing stops people from being able to move throughout the City and feeling of being unable to participate
- Even when sidewalks are cleared, the paths may not be wide enough for wheelchairs or those with mobility aids
- Snow blocking curb cuts when sidewalks and roads are cleared, preventing people from moving on and off sidewalks and safely accessing crosswalks

Snow Clearing & Salting (2/2)

- Lack of snow clearing around traffic light buttons
- Accessible City parking spaces being used to dump snow
- Lack of snow clearing at bus stops and at bus shelters
- Lack of salting on sidewalks
- Imbalance of service in snow clearing for vehicles compared to pedestrian routes

Barriers Identified

Parks, Trails and Playgrounds (1/2)

- Not all entrances to Victoria Park are accessible
- Lack of accessible trails limits who can use them. Many trails are not accessible for wheelchair users, hand cyclists and mobility aid users.
- Trees and shrubs impacting access to trails and pathways and lines of sight
- Lack of accessible playground equipment. For example, in playgrounds that have an accessible swing, there may be only one.

Parks, Trails, and Playgrounds (2/2)

- Frequency of maintenance on accessible equipment. If there is only one accessible piece of equipment and it is not well maintained, that playground cannot be used by persons with disabilities.
- Lack of communication boards at playgrounds
- Lack of fencing at many playgrounds. Fencing is important for those who tend to wander or run away (elopers)

Barriers Identified

Affordable Housing (1/2)

- Use of locks and keys inside housing units instead of automated doors. Doors are often heavy
- Need for more accessibility supports such as visual smoke alarms in multi-unit housing
- Low number of accessible housing units
- Difficult to find information about City-owned accessible housing

Affordable Housing (2/2)

- Documents needed to apply for City-owned housing can be hard to get, such as the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) Option C form. The example was given of a person who is hard of hearing having to arrange supports to gather the information, resulting in longer wait times.
- Having to duplicate application information when applying for City housing and provincial housing support
- Criteria used for accessing City housing, such as previous year's income

Barriers Identified

Signage and City Communications (1/2)

- Lack of Braille on City signage
- Lack of ASL support at City programs and when accessing City services
- Lack of promotion about how to report issues, such as improper use of accessible parking spaces or trees and shrubs preventing access to a sidewalk or trail
- Lack of awareness about how to receive information from the City

Signage and City Communications (2/2)

- Receiving communications from the City that a person can't use. Example was given of a person who is blind has advised the City of disability but continues to receive City communications by letter.
- Overuse of emojis in City communications

Barriers Identified

Construction Zones

- Lack of accessible alternate routes when sidewalks and roadways are impacted
- Uneven surfaces are created for extended periods of time with no alternate, safe options for accessible routes
- Signs and flag persons to help with the flow of traffic but no supports for those with vision loss
- Signage placed on sidewalk or at curb cuts
- Loud noise and smells, unexpected changes to the environment for those who are neurodivergent
- Lack of communication and available information about current construction zones and alternate safe, accessible routes

Barriers Identified

Buildings

- Automatic door openers not working or not opened for enough time
- Poorly lit building entrances and exits
- Cost of upgrades for buildings to become accessible
- Lack of paint or markings on indoor and outdoor stairs to help those with limited depth perception. For example, stairs near LSPU Hall.
- Lack of proper indoor and outdoor handrails

Barriers Identified

Other Barriers

- Attendant passholders cannot book online
- For those requiring accessible seating at venues, attendant passes only allow a person to sit with their attendant and not with a group.
- Accessible seating at venues should not only be at the back or in places with limited lines of sight
- Electronic paid parking stalls can be difficult to read, reach and know how to use. It also assumes everyone has access to a debit or credit card.
- Having to call 311 to have an issue marked as urgent is a challenge for those with hearing loss. Issues submitted through the 311 app are not marked as urgent.
- Garbage collection exemptions are only for the use of bins. It is still difficult for some persons with disabilities to put garbage bags by the curb independently.
- It was noted by an individual that the City has an Employment Equity Policy, but it doesn't seem that the City collects or reports information about the hiring of persons with disabilities or have any programs to support employment of persons with disabilities.

Public Suggestions to Remove and Prevent Barriers

Curb Cuts and Sidewalks (1/2)

- Better placement of curb cuts such as not on a hill or near a drainage grate
- Improve monitoring and maintenance of sidewalks. Cracks and uneven surfaces limit accessibility.
- Remove obstacles such as signs, poles and fire hydrants from sidewalks
- Take advantage of opportunities to improve current sidewalks during street rehab
- Install tactile markers in all areas and more accessible pedestrian signals, including using bright colors
- Create wider sidewalks

Curb Cuts and Sidewalks (2/2)

- Create narrower streets and have sidewalks with boulevards so there is a clearer divide between sidewalks and roadways
- Ensure trees and hedges from private properties are not blocking sidewalks
- Provide more public education and communication about proper placement of garbage bins and recycling
- Investigate areas where pedestrians and wheelchair users are using roadways instead of sidewalks (e.g., Harvey Road near fire station) to determine what changes may be needed

Public Suggestions to Remove and Prevent Barriers

Snow Clearing & Salting

- More sidewalk clearing in all areas of the City
- Don't block curb cuts when clearing snow from sidewalks or roads. This prevents people from being able to move on and off sidewalks, even if the sidewalk itself is plowed.
- Prioritize areas where disability organizations or programming are located, in the same way as school zones
- Increase salting of sidewalks

Trails, Parks, and Playgrounds

- Add communication boards to all playgrounds
- Add more accessible, paved paths in City parks
- Widen City trails to make them accessible to more people, such as those using wheelchairs, handcycles, and mobility aids
- Add fencing to playgrounds to make them more accessible to those who are more likely to wander or run away (elopers)
- More rest areas in parks and on trails

Public Suggestions to Remove and Prevent Barriers

City Programs (1/2)

- Increase inclusion supports to allow more children with disabilities to participate
- Provide personal care supports at City programs or financial and recruitment support for families providing their own workers
- City buildings and programs can be loud. Offer sensory-friendly programs, such as swimming sessions.
- Offer programs that can accommodate individuals using wheelchairs and ensure program areas are accessible. An example was adding accessible pathways to Paul Reynolds Community Garden.

City Programs (2/2)

- More adaptive equipment and storage at City buildings
- More variety in the times and locations of programming
- Reduced costs for some programs, such as those for seniors or persons with disabilities
- Allow caregivers to attend programs for free and flexibility for caregivers to attend their own programming by bringing those they care for
- Ensure staff are trained in understanding complex child behaviours and know how to work effectively with children with these issues

Public Suggestions to Remove and Prevent Barriers

City Buildings (1/2)

- Ensure elevators have buttons that are easy to reach for persons of all abilities
- More automated doors and ensure they are always working. It was also suggested an increase in the time an automated door remained open would be helpful.
- Ensure doors are wide enough for those using wheelchairs or mobility aids
- Add visible markers to all curbs, edges, and steps at City buildings
- Increase the contrast of colors used in buildings to help with wayfinding. For example, floors a contrasting color to walls and doors a contrasting color to walls.

City Buildings (2/2)

- Ensure appropriate changing facilities are available
- Add more older child/adult change rooms and tables
- Create access guides for City-operated buildings and public spaces, describing such things as the physical environment, sensory expectations when arriving, accessible entrances, location of elevators etc
- Ensure washrooms are accessible and the layout is functional for all. For example, soap dispensers and paper towels can be reached from a wheelchair, room to move a wheelchair around the washroom.

Public Suggestions to Remove and Prevent Barriers

City Events

- Use microphones, ASL interpreters and closed captioning at City events
- Ensure there is space for wheelchairs and mobility aids when individuals wish to use a chair
- Provide accessibility information before an event, such as where accessible parking is located and accessible entrances, and contact information for individuals to learn more
- Improve accessibility of the pedestrian mall
- Give sensory considerations for events, such as lower volume of music and lower lighting. An example of the Downtown Santa Claus parade was given, with consideration needed for the location of the sensory-friendly areas.

Affordable Housing

- Ensure all future housing is built with accessibility considerations
- Add more automated doors and other measures such as visual smoke alarms
- Increase the number of accessible affordable housing units
- Explore an application form that can be submitted online
- Remove requirement for documents from CRA for housing applications
- Review current criteria for accessing City housing and any opportunities to remove duplicate work for people applying to both the City and NL Housing

Public Suggestions to Remove and Prevent Barriers

Accessible Parking (1/2)

- Provide more accessible parking spaces and ensure public spaces, including trails, have accessible parking
- Increase enforcement of proper use of accessible parking spaces
- Provide more public education about the proper use of accessible parking zones
- Pave all accessible parking spaces. An example given was gravel parking spaces at Bowring Park.

Accessible Parking (2/2)

- Have identified accessible drop off and pick up areas and make this information easily available. It was felt that 311 does not always have the information available.
- Make it easier to find information about location of accessible parking to help individuals plan an outing. For example, a map showing accessible parking near the pedestrian mall or a City park.

Public Suggestions to Remove and Prevent Barriers

Construction

- Provide advanced public notice for any construction work, including detours or sidewalk closures
- Provide accessible alternate routes when sidewalks are closed
- Ensure accessible design is considered during any construction process
- Require contractors to submit a plan ensuring accessibility is maintained during construction and enforce the plan

Project Planning

- Consult with persons with disabilities or subject matter experts in all phases of a project to ensure current barriers are addressed and no new barriers created
- Consider accessibility in all projects
- Consider how to create equity among all users of a program, service or space
- Follow the principles of universal design
- Use guidance of CSA B651 accessible design standards in new builds and modifications

Public Suggestions to Remove and Prevent Barriers

Signage & City Communications (1/2)

- Ensure signage has large font and proper contrast between the background and lettering
- Use Braille and pictures on signage
- Provide information about City services in different ways such as using videos, video transcriptions, closed captioning
- Use clear, plain language
- Provide detailed information about programs and events for persons with disabilities and make it easy to access

Signage & City Communications (2/2)

- Ensure accessible website standards are followed
- Provide more information about what to expect when accessing City services and how City services work. For example, describe the building, what to expect when you arrive, and where to go.
- More promotion of events and designs that stand out from other messaging
- Create a way for the City to record individual communication type needs, such as Braille instead of written text for important notifications

Public Suggestions to Remove and Prevent Barriers

Public Transit (1/2)

- Clear snow and ice from bus stops and bus shelters
- Add bus shelters and benches to bus stops
- Ensure public spaces can be accessed by using public transit
- Ensure bus stops are near crosswalks. For example, it was noted there is no crosswalk at the intersection of Ridge Road and Furlong Street and many cross the road to get to the bus stop.
- Create accessible identification of bus stops, such as clear signage, Braille, tactile indicators, and digital-based identifiers for those with smart phones (CLS).

Public Transit (2/2)

- Ensure all bus drivers receive training on the harness system
- Make public transit more accessible to those with intellectual disabilities
- Add audible stop announcements and text banner announcements in buses. It was suggested that audible announcement of the route number when entering a bus would also be helpful.
- Improve the comfort of public buses such as more comfortable seats and smoother driving
- Add more buses, increase the frequency of bus arrivals, and start and end times of public transit

Public Suggestions to Remove and Prevent Barriers

City Staff

- Provide equity, diversity, and inclusion training to all staff, including refreshers
- Provide more training about providing customer service to persons with disabilities, including both visible and invisible disabilities
- Teach staff basic ASL
- Have an ASL interpreter on staff
- Have a quiet space available to provide customer service if an individual has hearing loss or would like a place free of distractions
- Spend time explaining processes or assisting those with learning disabilities

Public Suggestions to Remove and Prevent Barriers

Other Ideas (1/2)

- Allow residents to put up safety signs near homes when there is a child with a disability in the area
- Develop attendant pass protocols
- Reduce the cost of City programs
- Ensure a service is available in more than one way, such as through a phone app
- Consider a more equitable application of the water tax. Current structure can create a financial burden for seniors and persons with disabilities.

Other Ideas (2/2)

- Provide resources to businesses to help them become more accessible, such as education and reduced taxes for businesses that are accessible
- Provide more information about accommodations in City job ads
- Consider if job requirements that may exclude persons with disabilities, such as the requirement of having a vehicle and driver's license, are necessary
- Implement required review periods to assess the City's performance on accessibility

Public Suggestions to Remove and Prevent Barriers



Other Ideas (3/3)

- Ensure all aspects of public washrooms are accessible, including where soap dispensers and hand bars are located. It was noted during a public session that having emergency buttons in public washrooms would be helpful.
- Consider ways an individual could submit an urgent 311 request without calling in. As an example, It was suggested that the ability to text 311 would be helpful for a person who is deaf or hard of hearing.
- It was suggested that more frequent recycling pickup would be helpful.

Other Feedback

- Positive feedback was received about the accessibility measures that are already in place and that the City should continue to add more measures. The accessible equipment lending program was identified as an example of great City program.
- Positive feedback was received about 311 services, public transit drivers, the availability of inclusive programming, and the use of alt text and image descriptions in social media.
- It was felt that the City should consult with members of the disability community more often, they are the subject matter experts in their lived experience. It was suggested that individuals should be compensated for providing their feedback.
- It was noted that public engagement and participation on these matters is important. It is important to ensure public engagement is accessible.
- It was suggested that the City should work with the business community and the provincial government to identify areas for accessibility improvements, including public buildings and sidewalks in front of buildings.
- A small number of individuals expressed safety concerns about shared use paths.

What does an accessible St. John's mean to you? (1/2)

- Being able to roll, cycle, or walk anywhere in the City safely, year-round
- All public buildings being wheelchair, rollator and walker accessible, including mandatory automated doors in and out
- More accessible parking spaces
- Access to accessible public washrooms, particularly downtown and in all parks
- Accessible sidewalks that are level, wide, have curb cuts in appropriate places, and are free of obstacles
- Allowing bikes on trails and paths, and more accessible trails and paths
- More rest stops and water stations on trails and in parks
- Slower moving traffic and safe, pedestrian-focused planning for roads and intersections
- Accessible crosswalks with flashing lights
- Easy to use public transit

What does an accessible St. John's mean to you? (2/2)

- Being able to access City information when I need it and knowing how to access it
- Having the opportunity to participate in employment, recreation, and entertainment
- Beautiful spaces that are accessible to all
- Historic and heritage buildings and public spaces that are accessible to all
- Use of accessible design standards, reflecting best practice rather than code minimums
- Using microphones and PA systems at City programs and services
- Continuously evolving
- Being able to age in place
- City that feels safe

Highlights from City Advisory Committees and Working Groups (1/3)

- Having accessible sidewalks is critical to providing services to individuals of all abilities. Considerations such as the placement and angle of curb cuts, maintenance of sidewalks so that it remains a smooth surface, clearing of snow and ice, maintaining accessible routes during construction, and communication about accessible routes are important.
- Current snow clearing from roads and sidewalks creates hazards. Often there is snow left at the end of a sidewalk, eliminating access to a curb cut to safely enter or exit the sidewalk.
- Challenges with City housing such as the application process and the need for accessibility measures such as accessible fire alarms, including in common areas in multi-unit housing
- More accessible parking, communication about where accessible parking is located, and enforcement of appropriate use of accessible parking

Highlights from City Advisory Committees and Working Groups (2/3)

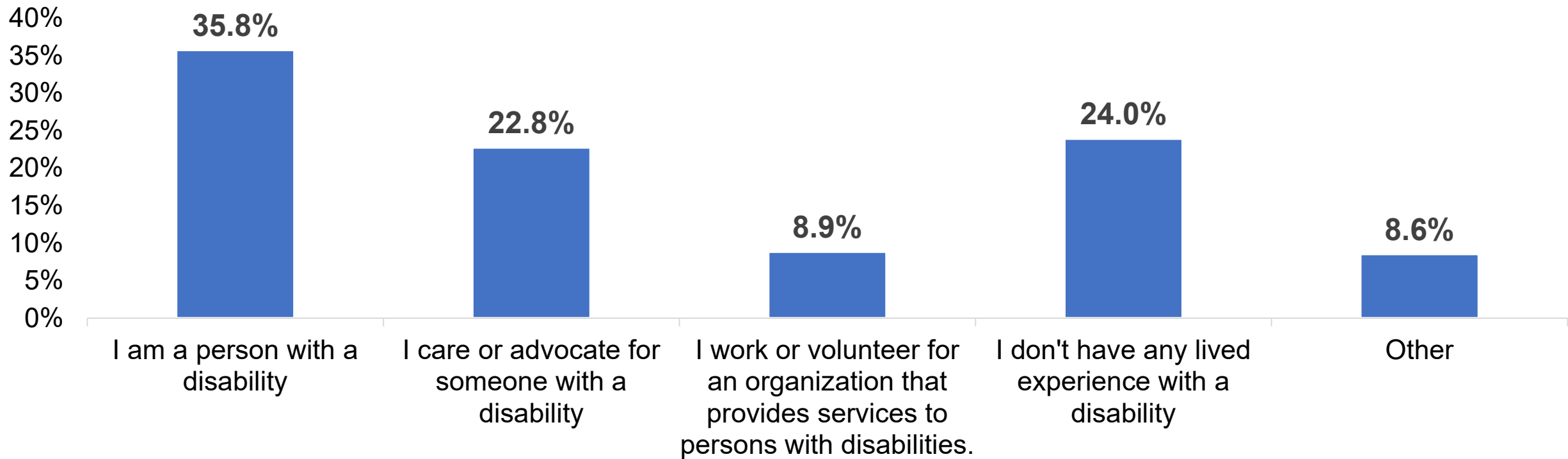
- There is a lack of accessible public washrooms, particularly in the downtown area which limits the ability of some to visit certain buildings or spaces.
- Public transit can be unreliable. There is a lack of accessible stops and routes, lack of audible stop announcements and lack of knowledge of staff on how to properly use the harness systems.
- It was noted by some that public transit employees require more training about inclusive customer service; other members had positive experiences with the service provided by GoBus and the drivers understanding of the user needs.
- There should be a way for the City to document those who require communications in a different manner. For example, an individual identifying to the City they are blind but continues to receive City communications in a written letter format.

Highlights from City Advisory Committees and Working Groups (3/3)

- It was noted that CSA B651 and provincial building accessibility regulations often contradict each other which creates confusion for developers and contractors. An example is handrails in a shower. To create consistency, it would be helpful if the City accepted the highest standard rather than what is in the statute.
- It was suggested that offering incentives, ensuring new or remediated sidewalks are wide enough to support ramp structures near heritage buildings, and providing more design guidance could help improve the accessibility of heritage buildings.
- The need for a bylaw to allow the city to create its own design standards was identified.

Other Information from Public Survey (1/5)

Which of the following best describes you?



n=338

n is the number of people who answered a question

Other included aging individuals or have aging parents, health care workers, have a temporary disability, pedestrians, advocate for overall accessibility, etc.

Other Information from Public Survey (2/5)

- Respondents identifying as a person with a disability represented a variety of both visible and invisible disabilities
- 57% of those with a disability reported experiencing at least one barrier
 - 67% had architectural barriers
 - 49% had physical barriers
 - 30% had information/communication barriers
 - 26% had systematic or policy barriers
 - 16% had technology barriers
 - 16% had attitudinal barriers
- 67% of respondents who care or advocate for a person with a disability care for individuals under 18 or over 55; 32% care of individuals between 18 and 54.
- 68% reported those they care, or advocate for, have experienced barriers.
 - 62% had architectural barriers
 - 38% had physical barriers
 - 24% had information/communication barriers
 - 24% had systematic or policy barriers
 - 7% had technology barriers
 - 26% had attitudinal barriers

Other Information from Public Survey (3/5)

Accommodations

- 28% indicated they need to request an accommodation when accessing City programs or services. (n=166)
- Types of accommodations requested include:
 - Materials available ahead of time/in a different format such as large print
 - ASL interpretation
 - Ensuring a space is accessible
 - Inclusion worker or caregiver participation
 - Interpreter for phone services
 - Autism or sensory-friendly environment
 - Lifts for pool access
 - Receive information and processes verbally

Other Information from Public Survey (4/5)

Finding City Information

- The majority of respondents receive information from the City website and notifications, City social media channels and mainstream media. (n=206)
- 57% of persons with a disability find City information through the City website or notifications; 54% through City social media channels; 54% through mainstream media. (n=82)
- 71% of respondents who care or advocate for a person with a disability receive City information through the City website and notifications; 56% through City social media channels. (n=55)
- 61% of respondents associated with a disability organization find information through City social media channels and mainstream media; 56% the City website and notifications. (n=18)
- 77% of respondents who have no lived experience with a disability are the most likely to find information through the City website or notifications. (n=35)

Other Information from Public Survey – Individuals Associated with an Organization (5/5)

- Respondents had experience with all disabilities identified in the survey.
- 70% indicated they've experienced barriers when accessing City programs, services or public spaces with clients.
 - 56% had architectural barriers
 - 69% had physical barriers
 - 63% had information/communication barriers
 - 44% had systemic or policy barriers
 - 38% had technology barriers
 - 25% had attitudinal barriers
 - 6% had other barriers (program support)

The following barriers were specifically noted by respondents:

- Signage without Braille
- Lack of alternative communication devices
- Low number of inclusion workers
- Access to supports such as ASL interpreters, closed captioning, and microphones at City events
- Lack of visual smoke alarms in City buildings
- Lack of safe snow clearing on sidewalks and pedestrian routes
- Lack of sidewalks in some areas of the city

Other Information from City Influencers Survey

- 58% of respondents identified as a person with a disability, worker or volunteer with a disability organization, or care or advocate for an individual with a disability.
- 33% indicated they have experienced a barrier in accessing City programs, services or public spaces.
 - Barriers identified included transit, financial aid, emotional support and accommodation support.
- Comments were also received related to the need for more sidewalk snow clearing, particularly near schools, for financial support for places to become more accessible, and for more social inclusion programs that include minorities and newcomers

Respondents identified a variety of ideas about what an accessible St. John's means to them, including:

- More ramps, particularly downtown
- More accessible parking and accessible washrooms
- Equitable opportunity to have the same experiences as people without disabilities
- Walkable city with safe active transportation and reliable public transit
- Public transit for individuals of all abilities to get them wherever they need to go
- Wide, safe sidewalks for those with mobility aids and strollers
- No obstacles that create stress or harm

What We Heard Summary (1/3)

- Sidewalk and curb cut barriers were identified by all stakeholders, including the placement and angle of curb cuts, sidewalk snow clearing, obstacles on sidewalks, and maintenance.
- Barriers related to accessible parking were expressed by all stakeholders, including the need for more accessible parking, enforcement of proper use, and the need for more information about the location of accessible parking.
- Many expressed the importance of making sure that accessible alternative routes are provided in construction areas. There must be safe ways for people to move on and off sidewalks in these areas and stay safe from road traffic.
- Public transit is an important issue, and many concerns were related to the accessibility of bus stops and nearby sidewalks. The availability of paratransit and Metrobus schedules were also raised by many.

What We Heard Summary (2/3)

- Many expressed that more inclusion workers are needed for City programs. The cost of attending programs and providing additional personal aides is too costly for some.
- The need for sensory-friendly areas and programs was brought forward.
- Many expressed a need for more accessible public washrooms, particularly downtown. Many participants also noted that the full design of washrooms should be considered for accessibility.
- Accessibility of parks and trails through clear paths, good lines of sight, and wide paths that people of all abilities can use was important to many. It was noted that paths covered in rocks or gravel is difficult for many using wheelchairs and mobility aids to access.
- The importance of training for all City and transit staff related to customer service was identified, including for both visible and invisible disabilities. It was felt that staff could be more aware of how to assist persons with disabilities and ways to provide information in different formats.

What We Heard Summary (3/3)

- Positive feedback was received about accessible measures that the City currently has in place, but it was noted that many were not aware of the accessible measures. There is an opportunity to provide further information about such measures.
- It was noted that communication about City programs and services should take many formats, as different people receive information in different ways. For signage, it was noted that high contrast, large font, the use of pictures, and Braille would be helpful.
- Many stakeholders identified that consideration for both visible and invisible disabilities is essential in creating an accessible city.
- Many stakeholders expressed the importance of including the perspectives of persons with disabilities at all stages of project planning. This will help ensure new barriers are not created.

Other Information

- Metrobus completed an additional public engagement project in May 2023 related to accessibility of public transit in the City
- The [full report](#) can be found on the Metrobus website.
- A summary of the [City Influencers survey](#) can be found on EngageStJohns.ca.

Next Steps



Release What We
Heard



City staff to
develop
Accessibility Plan
and present to
Council



Plan adopted by
Council

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