



# District of Oak Bay Accessibility Plan

2025

# Territory Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that the land on which we live and work is the traditional territory of the Coast and Straits Salish Peoples. Specifically, we recognize the Lekwungen people, known today as the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations, and that their historic connections to these lands continue to this day.

## Definitions

The following words and definitions are good to keep in mind when reading this Accessibility Plan.

**Disability:** An inability to participate fully and equally in society because of the interaction of an impairment and a barrier.

**Impairment:** An impairment can be a physical, sensory, mental, intellectual, or cognitive impairment-whether permanent, temporary, or episodic.

**Accommodation:** The employer's responsibility under the Human Rights Code to adapt the workplace to meet the needs of the individual employee.

**Accessibility:** Accessibility involves developing laws, standards, and practices that remove barriers and support persons with disabilities to live with dignity and to meaningfully participate in their own communities.

**Procurement:** The process that we go through to buy or rent goods, services, or facilities.

# Introduction

## About the District of Oak Bay

The District of Oak Bay (Oak Bay) is located on the southern tip of Vancouver Island in British Columbia. The City of Victoria borders Oak Bay's west boundary, and the District of Saanich lies to the north. With approximately 18,000 residents, Oak Bay is one of 13 member municipalities comprising the Capital Regional District. The University of Victoria is partially located in Oak Bay, as is a small portion of Camosun College. Additional community landmarks include public and independent schools, two golf courses, a marina, a yacht club, and a luxury boutique hotel.

Oak Bay is a beautiful seaside community that is defined by its residential neighbourhoods, village centres with local businesses, historic character, mature tree canopy, shorelines, and abundance of green space. These features combined make Oak Bay one of the world's most desirable communities in which to live, work, and play.

## Our Commitment to Accessibility

The District of Oak Bay is working to create an inclusive, welcoming, and accessible community for all its residents and visitors. To do this we are committed to identifying, removing, and preventing barriers to accessibility across our programs and services, facilities, and infrastructure for the benefit of all who call Oak Bay home. We believe that the experience and expertise of people with disabilities can enhance our community and are striving to include these voices in our planning processes.

## Plan Framework

The Accessible British Columbia Act (Accessible BC Act) was passed into law in June 2021. The Act's goal is to remove barriers to accessibility for British Columbians with disabilities. The Accessible BC Act applies to public sector organizations including municipalities and regional districts. Organizations must establish an accessibility committee, write an accessibility plan, and develop a process for receiving feedback on accessibility. Accessibility standards will be

developed by the Provincial Accessibility Committee with more specific requirements affecting employment, transportation, the built environment, health, education, and procurement. We took this legislation and the principles with which it was written into our framework for assessing the current state of accessibility within the District of Oak Bay.

The Accessible BC Act complements other legislation in BC such as the BC Building Code, the Employment Standards Act, the Workers Compensation Act, Human Rights Code, and the Community Charter.

The Accessible BC Act directs us to consider the following principles when crafting our Accessibility Plan:

- **Self-determination:** the recognition that people with disabilities are in charge of their own lives and determining their own needs and priorities. All accessibility work must stem from this.
- **Universal Design:** A design principle which holds that spaces, processes, or tools should be welcoming and usable to anyone who accesses them. Rather than retrofitted for accessibility or requiring accommodations, these things should be designed in such a way that there are no barriers to usability for anyone.
- **Inclusion:** Ensuring that all people, including those with disabilities, can access and are included in the operations of a regulated entity.
- **Adaptability:** Ensuring that published Accessibility Plans and the goals contained therein are adaptable to the needs and priorities of people with disabilities. These may be subject to change based on people with disabilities, evolving priorities of people with disabilities, the emergence of new technologies, or a change in operations of the regulated entity.
- **Diversity:** The measurable representation or presence of differences in lived experience (e.g., race, sexuality, age, gender, ability) within a group. In the context of the Accessible BC Act we understand diversity in reference to the range of disabilities in a community and the various intersecting identities that those communities have.

- **Collaboration:** The recognition that people with disabilities are the experts on their own needs and experiences and that any work being done to support accessibility must be done in collaboration with them. People with disabilities are the most knowledgeable about accessibility and the most impacted by barriers to accessibility. Collaboration is key.

## Feedback

The District of Oak Bay values your input and feedback. We welcome feedback from individuals in the district who experience a barrier, witness someone else experiencing a barrier, or have thoughts on our Accessibility Plan. You can provide us feedback by:

Email: [administration@oakbay.ca](mailto:administration@oakbay.ca)

Telephone: 250-598-3311

# The District of Oak Bay Accessibility Advisory Committee

## Purpose

The District of Oak Bay formed the Accessibility Advisory Committee in Spring of 2024. The Committee is responsible for:

- Providing recommendations to Council on establishing an Accessibility Plan for Oak Bay. This is done along with the Staff Accessibility Working Group.
- Responding to referrals from Council related to accessibility issues for persons with disabilities. For example, providing advice and recommendations on the design of public spaces and facilities from the perspective of users.
- Responding to requests from the Staff Accessibility Working Group for input on new projects to identify and address accessibility concerns; and

- Providing advice on public awareness campaigns to raise awareness of accessibility issues and promote Oak Bay's efforts to make its services, facilities, and infrastructure accessible and barrier-free.

## Committee Membership

The committee consists of 5-9 members and is made up of a diverse group of individuals including:

- A member of Council to serve as a non-voting Chair of the committee.
- At least half of the members are persons with disabilities or individuals who support or represent an organization who supports persons with disabilities.
- At least one member who identifies as an Indigenous person; and
- A staff liaison who represents the Staff Accessibility Working Group

The committee considers both external and internal factors that can contribute to the larger goal of making the District more accessible and inclusive. It also ensures that the requirements of the Accessible BC Act are met and will contribute to the actioning of this Accessibility Plan over time.

## Consultations

Oak Bay engaged the services of an accessibility consulting firm, Left Turn Right Turn Ltd. to support the research and development of recommendations for improving accessibility and to facilitate consultations with the District's Accessibility Advisory Committee. LTRT facilitated discovery sessions with the Staff Accessibility Working Group to better understand the current state of accessibility in Oak Bay. LTRT also met with members of the District's municipal workforce including representatives from emergency services (Fire and Police departments), Human Resources, Parks, Recreation and Culture, communications, facilities, and planning. The purpose of these sessions served multiple goals; to determine what barriers are known to exist in Oak Bay, how accessibility is considered in decision-making processes, and what level of knowledge around accessibility exists within the organization. Staff consultations highlighted the need for training on disability and accessibility, job specific training on accessible

communications and accessible language, and long-term planning for the removal of accessibility barriers in the built environment.

LTRT facilitated the first meeting of the Oak Bay's Accessibility Advisory Group in September 2024, through which extensive feedback was received about public perceptions and experiences of accessibility in Oak Bay. Committee members were given a presentation on the accessibility planning project, their role in the process, and what findings had been uncovered to date. Committee members were able to provide feedback about their experiences and ask questions about the project to the consultants and staff that were present. The feedback received from the committee members fell into three categories:

- Accessibility in the built environment of Oak Bay,
- Accessibility of customer service practices and interactions with Oak Bay staff; and
- The level and accessibility of communications between Oak Bay and its residents.

Both the Staff Working Group and the Accessibility Advisory Committee were consulted and asked to provide feedback on the action items presented in this plan. In these consultations staff were able to provide insight as to which actions were feasible for them to implement. All the actions have been endorsed by staff. The consultations with the Accessibility Advisory Committee resulted in a new action item being added to the Plan, about developing partnerships with existing disability service organizations. This consultation also enabled conversation about other plans underway, such as the Sidewalk and Pedestrian Master Plan, that also consider accessibility. This feedback has been incorporated into many of the actions we will be taking to improve accessibility within Oak Bay.

## What We've Done So Far

The District of Oak Bay has made some steps towards improving accessibility and inclusion in Oak Bay. These steps include:

- The creation of an Inclusion Coordinator role within Parks, Recreation, and Culture. The Inclusion Coordinator is currently focused on improving accessibility of our summer camps and recreation programming but will focus in the long term on overall accessibility planning.

- Designated funding for accessibility improvements within the Facilities and Infrastructure department's budgeting process.
- Making accessibility improvements to the changerooms and washrooms at the Monterey Recreation Centre to improve accessibility i.e. a universal washroom that is accessible for mobility device users.
- Redesigning and merging our Parks, Recreation, and Culture and Oak Bay websites to comply with current Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) standards.
- Implementing our Playground Replacement Policy which includes accessibility as a key principle
- Implementing our Pedestrian and Sidewalk Master Plan to improve accessibility, safety, and connectivity of the public realm in the Oak Bay.
- Recruited for and assembled our first ever Accessibility Advisory Committee for the District of Oak Bay.
- Developing a process to ensure all public facing communications on the Oak Bay website are written in plain language



# Our Accessibility Plan

This Accessibility Plan outlines how Oak Bay will improve and continue its efforts to remove barriers and increase awareness of disability and accessibility. The plan covers the accessibility of our services, employment, emergency services, information and communications, transportation, buildings, infrastructure, and public spaces, public education and awareness, and procurement. The actions below outline how we will accomplish improvements to accessibility in our region.

## General

Barrier	Action
<b>Staff have not received training on accessibility, disability, or accessible customer service best practices.</b>	<p>We will research and deliver training on accessibility and disability awareness for relevant staff beginning with managers, supervisors, and frontline customer service staff.</p> <p>We will review this training annually and update it as needed to keep up with evolving training needs.</p>

## Services

Barrier	Action
<b>Not all departments have dedicated financial resources for improving accessibility.</b>	<p>We will include line items in upcoming budgets to support the implementation of accessibility initiatives and improvements.</p> <p>We will research and apply for grant opportunities for higher cost initiatives such as staff training and infrastructure improvements.</p>

<b>We have not explored partnerships with disability service organizations or other levels of government to support accessibility initiatives in Oak Bay.</b>	We will research and seek out partnerships with other organizations to build capacity around accessibility and support the implementation of this plan.
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## Employment

Barrier	Action
<b>The District does not currently have an employee accommodations policy.</b>	<p>We will develop an accommodations policy and process for Oak Bay employees. The process will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have clear guidance on how to request accommodations and the timeline for fulfillment</li> <li>• Communicate the expectations for both employee and employer</li> <li>• Reflect both legal requirements and the current industry best practices in accessible employment.</li> </ul>
<b>Recruitment and hiring processes and materials have not been reviewed for accessibility.</b>	We will conduct a review of our recruitment and hiring processes, job postings, and onboarding materials through an accessibility lens.
<b>The District does not have a feedback mechanism set up for</b>	We will consult with employees in the process of developing an employee feedback mechanism about accessibility in the workplace. We will also

<b>employees to provide feedback about accessibility.</b>	develop a process for recording and storing feedback.
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## Emergency Services and Planning

<b>Barrier</b>	<b>Action</b>
<b>Emergency services employees, including Police and Fire employees have not received disability and accessibility training. They have also not received training on how to conduct emergency procedures accessibly.</b>	Emergency services staff will undergo general and job specific training on accessibility. This training will include best practices for interacting with people with disabilities and accessible communications.
<b>District residents may not be aware of accessibility best practices for emergencies.</b>	<p>We will incorporate accessibility into emergency planning public education campaigns including how residents and visitors with disabilities can access emergency services and how neighbours can support fellow residents with disabilities in the event of an emergency.</p> <p>We will highlight the importance of visual and auditory alarms in key spaces.</p> <p>We will review and update emergency plans and include provisions for supporting people with disabilities in an emergency.</p>

## Information and Communications

Barrier	Action
<b>Oak Bay does not have guidance on accessible communications available to employees.</b>	<p>We will develop accessible communications guidance and make that guidance available to all employees responsible for creating communications materials. This guidance will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Accessibility best practices for social media communications (i.e. alternative text, camel case hashtags, plain language, captioning etc.)</li><li>• Website accessibility</li><li>• Creating accessible documents for internal use such as presentations and meeting agendas</li><li>• Creating accessible public facing documents such as active transportation plans, official community plans, council meeting agendas, community newsletters etc.</li></ul> <p>We will ensure that when updating or developing these policies that consideration is given to both accessible formats and accessible and inclusive channels of dissemination.</p>
<b>Council and committee meetings have not been reviewed for accessibility and may present barriers for</b>	<p>We will develop guidelines for meeting accessibility, both for in-person and virtual meetings. We will share these guidelines with relevant staff.</p>

participants and observers with disabilities.	
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## The Built Environment and Public Spaces

Barrier	Action
<b>Oak Bay has many aging public buildings (such as the Fire Hall, Police station, Municipal Hall, and recreation centres) that can present barriers for people with disabilities.</b>	<p>We will incorporate accessibility standards into municipal facilities that consider a variety of disabilities to ensure that Oak Bay's buildings are accessible. These standards will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Best practices in accessible design</li> <li>• Consulting with the Accessibility Advisory Committee in the design process for renovations, renewals, and for new public buildings</li> <li>• Researching grant opportunities to support greater accessibility advancements in building renewals, renovations and new public buildings</li> </ul>
<b>Oak Bay's infrastructure (i.e. sidewalks, trails, and other public spaces) can present barriers for people with disabilities.</b>	<p>We will incorporate accessibility standards into infrastructure that consider a variety of disabilities to ensure that Oak Bay's infrastructure is accessible. These standards will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Best practices in accessible design</li> <li>• Consulting with the Accessibility Advisory Committee in the design process for</li> </ul>

	<p>renovations, renewals, and for new infrastructure.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Researching grant opportunities to support greater accessibility advancements in building renewals, renovations and new infrastructure.</li> <li>• Incorporating design elements from the <u><a href="#">British Columbia Active Transportation Design Guide</a></u></li> </ul>
<b>Signage in Oak Bay may have been developed without considering accessibility.</b>	<p>We will conduct a review of non-regulatory municipal signage (signage that is not required by law) to determine the current level of accessibility. Make plans to integrate accessibility features when updating or replacing non-regulatory municipal signage. We will engage the Accessibility Advisory Committee to provide feedback on new designs.</p> <p>Accessibility features for signage can include plain language, easy-to-read fonts, visual cues, pictograms, and tactile signage. We will include information that describes the level of accessibility and types of accessibility features present in the environment.</p>
<b>Parking lots, and curbside parking spaces in Oak Bay may not have sufficient accessible parking spaces.</b>	<p>We will conduct a review of accessible parking spaces in municipal lots and on street parking locations in key areas in Oak Bay.</p> <p>We will review the parking facilities bylaw regarding accessible parking spaces required for private developments.</p>

## Procurement

Barrier	Action
<b>Oak Bay's procurement process does not formally include accessibility considerations.</b>	<p>We will update procurement procedures to include accessibility considerations where applicable.</p> <p>These updated procedures could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How to consider accessibility when purchasing new information technologies</li><li>• When to consider accessibility in procurement</li><li>• How to write requests for proposals using plain language</li><li>• Making procurement documents available in accessible formats for vendors.</li></ul>

## Transportation

Barrier	Action
<b>A comprehensive review of bus stops in Oak Bay has not been completed.</b>	<p>We will conduct an accessibility review of all bus stop locations and amenities in Oak Bay.</p> <p>We will develop a prioritization framework for accessibility improvements at these locations.</p>

# Monitoring and Evaluation

The District of Oak Bay Accessibility Plan will be updated in 2027. Staff will be responsible for monitoring the progress of the actions in this plan and progress will be reported on to the Accessibility Advisory Committee on an annual basis