

2010 Legacies Now

Measuring Up Vernon, British Columbia



Accessibility and Inclusion for People With Disabilities 2008



Vernon

Promoting a new perspective on disability



by Melanie Tighe Lovsin

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I would like to acknowledge all the members of the Advisory Committee and in particular thank the following people for their guidance and contribution: Laura Hockman, Executive Director, Independent Living Vernon, Don Hood, Independent Living Vernon and Sonja Gaudet, Paralympian, Vernon BC.

I would also like to acknowledge and thank all the people who participated in Measuring Up Vernon. The sharing of personal stories and the respect from everyone exemplifies the kind of City Greater Vernon represents.

Measuring-Up Vernon is an initiative of Independent Living Vernon, Vernon British Columbia, October 2008.

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CRITICAL GOALS : SMART SOLUTIONS

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Thought Provoking Quotes

“I would like to walk through the front door of the restaurant with my family and friends”.

“My daughter would like to choose which beach she goes to with her friends. Because of the lack of accessibility at all local beaches she can't and is sometimes excluded from the fun.”

“We usually turn off our hearing aids when we are in the pool. A red digital message board would help when lifeguards need to relay messages”.

“The current lift in the lap pool frightens users and makes a spectacle out of us. We want to be inclusive and not feel different or like we are being placed in a situation to make a spectacle out of ourselves”.

“Having to go through back alleys to get into a coffee shop, because there is a step at the front entrance, provides a different and not always welcome view of the community, with dumpsters, rotten food, and drug addicts”.

“I received a parking fine for not putting money in the meter. I was there in my wheelchair and I expressed to the By-Law Officer that I could not get up onto the sidewalk due to the lack of a curb cut- out”.

“When I called City staff about how little time is provided for a pedestrian to cross the street before the light turned red, the response was: “Well at least you have the law on your side, if you get hit.”

Measuring Up Vernon

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Measuring Up Vernon is a collaborative process that engages people with various disabilities and leaders from a range of sectors in the community to evaluate how accessible and inclusive Vernon is now and work together to set goals for improvements. Measuring Up is designed to help municipalities in British Columbia identify and remove barriers faced by people with disabilities, seniors and others. It is also the degree to which people with disabilities are welcomed, engaged and contributing to community life. One of the spin-off benefits of an accessible community is the ability for people with disabilities to become employed. The 10 x10 Challenge is the challenge to increase employment levels of people with disabilities by 10 % by the year 2010.

Background

Since the successful bid for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympics Winter Games in 2000, many initiatives have been launched which will have lasting and sustainable legacies for all British Columbians. 2010 Legacies Now, a non-profit society, is committed to building stronger communities where people can live actively in all aspects of community life.

Measuring Up is one of the programs offered by 2010 Legacies Now, designed to improve accessibility and inclusion in local communities. By supporting and funding projects that improve the quality of life for those living with a disability throughout the province, British Columbia has the potential to become the most disability-friendly and even senior-friendly province in Canada.

In January 2005, representatives in British Columbia from a wide range of organizations serving people with disabilities, municipal and business leaders, political representatives and community members came together to discuss and propose a framework for discussion. Using the earlier work of the Accessible/Inclusive Cities and Communities Project, the framework

for Measuring Up was created and the goal for sustainability and inclusion was further developed.

Independent Living Vernon followed several steps to become eligible for funding under 2010 Legacies Now and to participate in the province wide initiative called Measuring Up. A local Vernon Advisory Committee was established and included members of the Board of Directors of Independent Living Vernon, its Executive Director, an elected official, and a representative from the Vernon Chamber of Commerce.

Independent Living Vernon made a presentation to Vernon City Council and Council later discussed Measuring Up Vernon and The 10 x 10 Challenge and adopted the following resolution on December 10, 2007, stating:

“That the City of Vernon actively participate, support, promote and work to implement the Measuring Up initiative to assess and advance the inclusion and access of persons living with disabilities in Vernon;

And Further, that the City of Vernon join the 10 x 10 challenge and work with the Minister’s Council on employment of Persons with Disabilities to help meet the target of increasing employment for persons with disabilities by 10% by 2010”.

In 2008 with a grant from 2010 Legacies Now, Measuring Up Vernon began. In the spirit of collaboration with as many stakeholders as possible, this initiative has moved forward with enthusiasm and inspiration working towards building and sustaining a community that is fully accessible and inclusive.

Goals

One of the goals and vision of Independent Living Vernon is to make Greater Vernon one of the leading municipalities in the Okanagan to become sensitive to barriers affecting the lives of people with disabilities and to take action on removing these barriers.

This report identifies dozens of ways to remove barriers and improve the life of people with disabilities and making every aspect of life accessible.

The vision is to help Greater Vernon become a City where people with disabilities can fully participate and contribute and in particular, have improved access to information, reduce physical and attitudinal barriers, create volunteer and employment opportunities, and enjoy a better quality of life.

Key to the success of this initiative was to engage citizens, including ones with disabilities, seniors, community leaders, business people, athletes, associations and other stakeholders in conversations about accessibility, inclusion and attitudes.

Inherent in the framework and guidelines was the 10 x 10 Challenge. This challenge to increase employment of persons with disabilities by 10% by 2010 is possible with commitment and leadership. People with disabilities are an under-utilized resource. Greater Vernon is encouraged to tap into this talented and dedicated labour market.

The four elements of accessibility and inclusion at the community level are, but not exclusive to or limited to:

Disability support services

Access to information

Economic participation

Community contribution

Making Vernon a more accessible, inclusive community will empower individuals with a visible or invisible disability to fully participate in this community. The reduction and removal of physical, structural and attitudinal barriers enables citizens in Greater Vernon to enjoy a lifestyle full of the benefits they should experience.

Executive Summary

The Measuring Up Vernon Report is as a result of extensive consultation with people with disabilities, with leaders representing organizations of people with disabilities, government leaders, municipal staff, the business sector, seniors, youth and children. Comments generated from focus groups and meetings and existing research formed the basis of the findings. A newspaper column in the Vernon Morning Star generated feedback and stories from consumers in the community.

Input from individuals with a disability have included people with physical and or mobility disabilities, people with visual, hearing and speech impairments, psychiatric and intellectual disabilities, youth, and representatives for people with learning disabilities.

Dozens of barriers and recommended solutions are identified in this report. Some recommendations, such as ones for individual businesses, are listed in the Appendix. The Vernon Measuring Up Advisory Committee **recommends** the following **six priority areas** based on the extensive input received from participants:

- 1) Independent Living Vernon - Advocacy Action
- 2) Downtown Vernon
- 3) Parks and Beaches
- 4) Structural Improvements to Streets and Sidewalks
- 5) Public Facilities Upgrades
- 6) Schools and surrounding areas

Many of these recommendations will benefit people with specific disabilities. They will also help seniors, baby boomers assisting their senior parents, parents with children in strollers, families trying to enjoy an outing together at the beach or attend a hockey game at the Wesbild Centre. Improvements will also make Greater Vernon a safe and healthy community, help reduce financial barriers, create a stronger tourist

destination, and assist with making Greater Vernon more “green” and sustainable.

The economic spin off benefits are significant when people with disabilities can access more businesses and purchase their goods and services. In addition, this un-tapped and under-utilized labour force can generate income and spending power. In the current climate of labour shortage, this un-tapped labour market could solve some employment shortages. Many people with disabilities want to work and contribute to the community and want to be committed and reliable employees. Vernon has seen this commitment and reliability over the past couple of years with the increase of seniors working.

Discussions with the Mayor of Vernon, City Councillors, City staff and staff from the Regional District of North Okanagan have been extremely positive and we are appreciative of the leadership shown in the City of Vernon’s Official Community Plan.

Every effort has been made to address a wide range of issues and topics. Given the size, scope and timeframe of this project, some areas may need further research and follow-up.

Several positive outcomes and spin-off benefits were generated as a result of this initiative:

- An Action Plan for Independent Living Vernon to integrate into their umbrella Strategic Plan.
- Dialogue between people with visible and non-visible disabilities and able bodied people and between consumers and government and business was invaluable. Over a series of focus group meetings, people shared their stories, frustrations, appreciation and solutions.
- Attitudinal barriers were broken down by having this mix of people and dialogue.
- Numerous contacts were made for future discussions and projects.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Vernon Measuring UP Advisory Committee in consultation with citizens and organizations, recommends the following 6 priority areas to be addressed over the short and long term:

- 1) Advocacy Action: by Independent Living Vernon
- 2) Downtown Vernon: by Downtown Merchants and the City of Vernon, advocacy by Downtown Vernon Association, Vernon Chamber of Commerce, Rotary Clubs, other business organizations .
- 3) Parks and Beaches: by Regional District of the North Okanagan
- 4) Structural Improvements to Streets, Sidewalks and other areas: by the City of Vernon
- 5) Public Facilities Upgrades: by Regional District of the North Okanagan
- 6) Schools: School District 22, the City of Vernon and the Municipality of Coldstream.

The following details each recommendation:

1. Advocacy Action by Independent Living Vernon

- Obtain partners and funding to develop a website describing and promoting businesses in Greater Vernon having outstanding accessibility, similar to Access Richmond (accessrichmond.ca). Inform stakeholders such as the City of Vernon, Coldstream, RDNO and others associated to the construction industry of the web site and share web links.
- Prepare a Business Case for Accessibility in the Downtown area in partnership with the Downtown Vernon Association, the Vernon Chamber Of Commerce, THEO BC, Vernon and District Association for Community Living and other stakeholders. Offer an optional accessibility assessment survey to downtown businesses conducted by people with disabilities. Accessible business premises can result in increased business and a larger labour force.
- Meet regularly with the City of Vernon and RDNO to discuss the progress on improvements needed to sidewalks, roads and public facilities, as listed in this report.
- Support the initiative put forth by the Vernon and District Associations for Community Living's Health and Safety Committee to develop and send a post card to merchants and businesses saying "one of your customers experienced some difficulty with accessibility in your business....contact us if we can offer some advice or assistance". (See Appendix for list of recommendations of improvements to businesses as recommended by people attending the focus groups).
- Letter to the BC Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance suggesting policy changes for people with disabilities, eligibility and medical assistance. Set up follow-up meeting.
- Send a letter of support to 2010 Legacies Now to continue and expand the Accessible Tourism Project.

- Pursue funding to create a visual DVD or photographs for a media campaign highlighting life from the perspective of people with disabilities.
- Revive the Media Watch Committee at Independent Living Vernon and respond to insensitive language used in the media or elsewhere with the intent of educating in a positive manner.
- Letter to the Centre for Universal Design supporting the review and updating of existing standards and guidelines of the Principles of Universal Design to bring them in line with the needs of people with accessibility problems and with the future needs of the aging population.
- Support the critical need for affordable, accessible and safe housing in Vernon.
- Share results of advocacy work with partner organizations like Community Living BC, Kindale Developmental Association, Vernon and District Association for Community Living and others.
- Letter to Vernon Bus Transit System and Taxi Companies outlining possible changes and improvements and set up follow up meetings.
- Letter to the Vernon RCMP and the Vernon Fire Department discussing the need to communicate emergency preparedness with people with disabilities. Set up follow up meeting.
- Continue the partnership with senior groups and organizations to ensure the needs of people with disabilities are met.

2. Downtown Vernon

- With the Downtown Vernon Association, the Vernon Chamber of Commerce, Community Futures, THEO BC, Rotary Clubs, Independent Living Vernon and other stakeholders, devise ways to promote the hiring of people with disabilities. The goal is part of the 2010 Legacies Now 10 x 10 challenge. Discuss overcoming attitudinal barriers and increasing employment.
- Work with downtown merchants, the Downtown Vernon Association, the Vernon Chamber of Commerce, the Vernon and District Associations for Community Living's Health and Safety Committee, the Rotary Clubs and Independent Living Vernon to provide merchants with information on how to make their premises accessible, both inside and out. This will increase business and provide opportunities for hiring people with disabilities.
- the City of Vernon to work with Independent Living Vernon to identify and make improvements to downtown streets, corners, sidewalks, intersections, and pedestrian light and auditory signals to make the area more accessible to the numerous people living within walking distance to downtown or using mobility equipment.
- While there is substantial support for going green and getting out of cars, people with disabilities need more designated parking spots in the downtown core. A bus route with stops close to the banks is also recommended.

3. Parks and Beaches: Upgrades by Regional District of North Okanagan

- Add boardwalks over the sand to create walkways at Kalamalka and Kin beaches for people using mobility equipment and strollers.
- Build a ramp into the water at both Kalamalka and Kin beaches. Consult Independent Living Vernon regarding the details of depth.
- In Vernon Parks, create paved or hard packed trails to make them accessible to people using mobility equipment as well as for seniors, parents with therapeutic or regular strollers. Add accessible picnic tables and benches.
- Upgrade/ install accessible washrooms and accessible change rooms to Polson Park, Kin Beach, Kal Beach, and Lakeside Park. Consult Independent Living on the details.
- Provide some hard packed surface trails at locations like the Gray Canal, BX Park or Becker Park. Consult Independent Living Vernon for details. Powell River, BC, currently has a 13 km trail circling a lake. Updated accessible washrooms, fishing docks, cabins and picnic tables have been added.
- Upgrade and install specific accessible playground equipment in Parks for children and adults. i.e. 5 point harness swings.
- Establish at least one central accessible park geared to all ages. Several organizations in Vernon support this initiative such as NOCCS, NONA, and Independent Living Vernon.
- Provide access to the various beaches on Kalamalka Lake and at Ellison Park through the use of existing service roads. Current access is far from the parking lots or has steep descents. People, for instance, with mobility equipment or severe arthritis or knee or hip disabilities require access.

4. Structural Improvements to Streets and Sidewalks and other Related Improvements: City of Vernon

With an emphasis on accessibility, going green and getting active and out of cars, improvements to the streets and sidewalks will benefit people with disabilities as well as the entire community.

The following are recommendations of both across-the-board improvements to streets and sidewalks and specific places which have been identified by the public at our focus groups:

Streets and Sidewalks	
Islands at intersections	Use flush to the road– open cut outs at intersection islands, similar to the intersection at the entrance of the Wesbild Centre. Many other islands in Greater Vernon are created in such a way that inhibit people with mobility equipment from safely ascending or descending them; or they are too narrow, or don't exist. The intersection at Hwy 97 and 25 th Ave is one example of an intersection island that could be improved.
Curb cut-outs on sidewalks onto roadways	Design gradual graded cut-outs to line up with white cross-walk lines on the street. This avoids placing people with mobility equipment such as wheelchairs, carts, walkers or strollers, in the dangerous position of entering the intersection outside of the white cross-walk lines, and into traffic, to cross the street. For people with visual impairments, the cut-outs require a lined-tactile warning surface and yellow paint on the curb. This includes

	<p>areas such as intersections, parking lots, roadways and sidewalks.</p> <p>Some intersections need a cut-out. All cut-outs need to be maintained.</p>
Timed pedestrian intersection signals	Extend the amount of time given to cross the street. This is particularly needed in the areas used heavily by seniors such as Downtown intersections, The Schubert Centre area, along Alexis Park Drive, and intersections adjoining to East Hill.
Audible Traffic Signals	Intersections require audible traffic signals.
Parking for People with Disabilities	Extend the length of the curb cut-outs next to designated parking for people with disabilities (parallel parking next to curb). A driver in a wheelchair needs more room in front of, or at the rear of, their vehicle to access the sidewalk. Currently it accommodates passengers only. A good example a cut-out that needs improving is on 31 Street at 30 Ave, north east corner of the street.
Parking Spaces	Create 10 more parking spaces for people with disabilities Downtown.
Snow Removal	Issue fines for failing to remove snow in a timely manner. People with disabilities use sidewalks as their livelihood.
Sprinklers and Dogs	Increase awareness that sprinklers leaving water on sidewalks and dogs off leash inhibits people from moving safely to their destination.
Wider sidewalks and clear	Sidewalks to have 6 feet in width of clear path to easily accommodate two mobility devices

of obstructions	adjacent to each other.
Sidewalks around the round a-bout at the Schubert Centre	Widen these to allow 2 people with mobility devices to proceed.
Sidewalk obstructions	Remind merchants of by-laws to keep sidewalks clear of obstructions, like Sandwich Boards. This will permit people with mobility equipment and people with sight impairments to walk safely.
Sidewalks	Add, repair, or widen sidewalks near all seniors living areas. For example, people coming from Heron Grove from 20 th Street and 48 th Ave to the Wall Mart shopping area need sidewalks with appropriate curb cut outs. There are many other areas as well.
Tactile Cues for visual impairments	Yellow lines on curb cut outs are extremely helpful. Include these as regular structural maintenance.
Sidewalk Cafe	Recommend an attractive low level chain link or fence surrounding outdoor cafe to help alert people with sight impairments of a sidewalk cafe.
31 st in front of Scotia McLeod	This sidewalk needs widening and the proximity of the bus bench and street sign, inhibits a person in a wheelchair from traveling on this sidewalk.
Hospital Hill, Hwy 97	Add a crosswalk flashing light, timed to allow people enough time to cross several lanes.
Sidewalks needed	Kalamalka Rd near Sun Country Cycle and

	<p>Vernon Golf Course.</p> <p>Along Anderson Way northbound. Currently bus stops are located on the grass – completely inaccessible to people with mobility equipment.</p>
Street Name Signs	Larger print. Vernon has a large population over 40 years old, the age in which peoples' eyes start to deteriorate.
Angle Parking	This kind of parking is ideal for people with disabilities, as long as it is wide enough. Parallel is more dangerous as the driver, potentially with a mobility device needs to get out on the side of traffic flow.
Upright Signage to parking	Add upright signage to designated parking spots for people with disabilities. This will make the spots visible when the painted decal is covered in snow.
25 th Ave & 41st Street	Repairs needed. Wheelchairs have problems at this intersection.
25 th Ave Walkway	Add lighting
35 th Ave Sidewalk near Hwy 97 and crosswalk	Needs improvements, including consideration to a flashing light crosswalk.
By-Law Officers	<p>offer them sensitivity training to needs of people with various disabilities.</p> <p>Issue fines to people using designated parking for people with disabilities without a valid parking permit.</p> <p>Train Officers to report to the City or appropriate officials potholes or curb</p>

	problems needing repairs.
Service BC Centre, 30 th Street & 32 Ave	Needs more designated parking for people with disabilities. Currently there is one only and it is located at the back of the building. Needs to be closer to the front door.
OTHER: CITY OF VERNON	
Vernon Transit Bus Transportation	Expand schedule to late evening and expand weekends and holiday schedule Expand routes in general and in particular to North end stores as well as to parks and beaches. Accommodate larger wheelchairs
HandyDART	Expand schedule on Saturdays and offer service on Sundays. Offer late night service and expand evening service. Improved customer service for telephone communication and scheduled service. Consult Independent Living on details. Improve the Brochure to make it easier to read. Expand the fleet from 6 to 8.
RCMP and Fire Department	Consult Independent Living Vernon on ways to best help people with a hearing, sight or mental disability during an emergency.
City of Vernon Offices: Accessibility and	Make these accessible for all people with disabilities and be a role model and hire

Employment	people with disabilities full or part time, as part of the resolution to increase employment by 10% by 2010.
Public Venues	Add announcing systems, captioning, visual signals, and tactile signage for people who have hearing and sight impairments.
Library	<p>Provide staff with information on how to speak with people with a hearing loss in this designated “quiet” environment. See appendix for tips.</p> <p>Improve the lighting outside of the Library</p>
City Planners, Policy Analysts, Building Department and Building Permit Staff	<p>Play a leading role in ensuring that building construction and renovations, building codes and existing Standards and Guidelines used - exceed the minimum requirements for making places accessible to all. (It has been reported that minimum requirements will no longer stand court challenges under the Human Rights Act).</p> <p>Offer training on Universal Design Principles as it pertains to accessibility for people with disabilities - to building permit staff, architects, designers, building management, event planners, and landscape architects.</p> <p>Contract out to produce a brochure on Universal Design Principles highlighting recommendations for accessible homes and buildings for people with disabilities.</p>

5. Public Facilities Upgrades: Regional District North Okanagan

Recommend a discussion between RDNO and Independent Living Vernon to review the following recommendations:

Recreation Centre:

Powell River, BC, boasts of having a fully accessible complex with continued improvements underway. Discussions between staff located in Vernon and Powell River and Independent Living are encouraged.

- Add push bottom device to open doors automatically on the West entrance door, the Auditorium door, and the door into the viewing area of the pool.
- Determine whether people with mobility impairments and seniors can push open the doors to the newly renovated washrooms.
- Weight Room: Many people with disabilities including those with diabetes, arthritis, poor circulation, as well as seniors would use this weight room on a regular basis if: it was larger; or had more floor space; had equipment like the **APT Cycle Active Passive Hand Cycle** from MACS Mobility and Care Suppliers Ltd in Vancouver at 604-729-7272 and macs4life@telus.net; and if the use cost less than the private fitness facilities in Vernon which are too costly for many people due to their initiation fees etc.

Pool area:

- Purchase a harness, similar to the one owned by Kindale, for people to borrow when using the change room for people with disabilities.
- Add a second accessible change room large enough for an adjustable changing table or wide and secure bench.
- Add a Ramp to the lap pool.
- Add a Ramp to the hot tub

- Add an elevator to access the waterslide. Children, teens and adults with mobility impairments and seniors – those not requiring a companion to descend the slide - would have access to this enjoyable experience.
- Steam room: Ensure the jets have been adjusted to not burn the legs of people who have no feeling in them.
- Install visual device for people with hearing impairments that coincide with announcements and messages over the PA system. A flashing light alerts people to look at the digital screen with large print. This system would benefit everyone in the pool due to the high level of noise.

Outside the Recreation Complex:

- Consider moving the existing new benches located in the round-about area of the Recreation Complex to the front entrance area, or, install new benches at the front entrance. Add overhead cover/roofs to the benches to protect people against rain, snow or heat while waiting for a taxi, HandyDart or family member with a car. If the cover is wide enough, scooters and wheelchairs can fit underneath – but beside the bench.

Currently Taxis will unfortunately not sit and wait outside for their client, or enter the Recreation centre to indicate they have arrived. Nor will they allow a client to pre-book. Reportedly, taxis can be anywhere from 10 minutes late to over one hour late, making it impossible and unsafe for a senior or person with a disability to wait.

- Add more designated parking for people with disabilities at the front entrance of the Recreation complex and mark all parking spaces with upright signage. This type of signage is visible in the winter time when snow covers the painted signage on the pavement.

Halina Centre:

This highly used Centre either needs a new location or significant renovations to meet the needs of the growing membership, many of whom have visible or invisible disabilities. Consultation with the existing Manager of the Centre will clarify the improvements and changes required.

The Greater Vernon Museum & Archives, the Vernon Public Art Gallery and the Vernon Library:

- Encourage staff to read the information in Appendix B of this report on how to speak with people with a hearing loss in these “quiet” environments.

Vernon and District Performing Arts Centre

- Review the needs with Independent Living Vernon the seating for people with disabilities and their families and friends.
- Look into the feasibility of providing tapes, CDs or recordings of performances for people with disabilities and seniors to borrow (similar to the system at the Library and Vernon Art Gallery) and listen to from their homes.

Wesbild Centre

- Review the needs of people with disabilities with Independent Living Vernon on wheelchair seating with family and friends and access to certain areas of the building and access to washrooms.
- Install a Taxi Telephone close to the front entrance and at the height according to universal design principles.

6. Schools

- Vernon School District 22 to survey all parents of a child with a visible or invisible disability, both learning and physical, to ensure their child's educational experience is inclusive and void of attitudinal barriers. This might include automatic door openers, sensitivity training to reduce stigmatization of and discrimination against students with disabilities, a ramp, accessible washrooms, alternate learning tools like Braille, equestrian therapy, hiking strollers, etc.
- Ensure parents with a disability can access their child's school and feel inclusive and respected.
- Ensure students with a disability are included in field trips and other school activities.
- Ensure students with disabilities are taking school buses that are properly equipped to meet their needs and provide a safe trip. For example, some buses may require headrests for students with a certain disabilities.
- Use Student Assessments to identify learning disabilities. Early detection and appropriate learning/teaching techniques can make the difference in a child's life.
- Ensure teachers have good training to assist students with learning disabilities and have the appropriate support.
- Launch a public campaign to recruit One on One Literacy assistance for students.
- Work with the City of Vernon and the Municipality of Coldstream and other communities in District 22 to identify and ensure all streets and sidewalks routes to and from schools are accessible for students with disabilities.

Methodology

Using the Measuring Up resource tool “Ready Set Go” as a starting point to open discussion, stakeholders discussed existing barriers and identified solutions whenever possible. A number of focus groups and meetings were held with people with a range of disabilities, leaders representing organizations for people with disabilities, the Mayor of Vernon, City Councillors, municipal staff, business leaders from the Downtown Vernon Association and the Vernon Chamber of Commerce and many other stakeholders, as listed in the appendix.

Existing reports were consulted as identified in the appendix and in particular, the 2004 Report entitled “Shaping our Community for Full Citizenship: Participation and Inclusion for People with Disabilities in the City of Vernon, by Paralympian Sonja Gaudet for Independent Living Vernon.

The Measuring Up elements of the framework presented to open discussions in focus groups were as follows:

1. Disability Support Services: personal supports, fully accessible and inclusive environments, transportation, housing choices, emergency preparedness, safety and education.

2. Access to Information: universal signage and way-finding, plain language, multiple formats (large print, Braille, sign language), and accurate portrayals.

3. Economic Participation: business and skills development, jobs and labour supply, disability market and consumer spending, niche markets such as accessible tourism.

4. Community Contribution: bringing new energy and talent to social, recreational, sports and cultural life of the community.

Focus Group Discussion Points:

1. Disability Support Services:

Our society has a long history of creating an infrastructure and public services to allow its citizens to live, travel, work, play, and volunteer with ease. Roads, building standards, educational institutions and public transit are obvious examples of critical adaptations that enable our active participation. While society depends on our various contributions, our ability to contribute depends on these supports.

Citizens with disabilities and their helping networks depend on this infrastructure too, although with certain modifications and adaptations. Without this support infrastructure they cannot contribute and fulfill their responsibilities as citizens.

The purpose of looking at *support services* in this initiative is to identify the critical supports necessary to ensure persons with disabilities can carry out their daily functions and live a good life, just like every other member of the community. In inclusive and accessible communities, everyone has access to the same resources: forums, institutions, services and the public and private spaces where citizens meet, discuss, work, learn, play, worship, contribute and socialize.

Personal supports: refers to the human and mechanical supports that can assist people with disabilities in daily living. i.e. attendant services, assistive equipment, devices. i.e. hearing aids, service dog, walker, wheelchair etc.

Accessible and inclusive built environment: refers to human made structures such as stores, schools, sidewalks, intersections, railroad crossings, sandwich advertisements, doors, medical facilities, washrooms, in both winter and summer conditions.

The Principles of Universal Design is “the design of products and environments to be usable by All People, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design”

http://www.design.ncsu.edu/cud/about_ud/about_ud.htm. The Principles are listed in the Appendix.

Can and will the City of Vernon take the Universal Design Principles one step further to fully address the needs of its current citizens and the aging population.

This report provides recommendations pertaining to the accessibility needs of persons with disabilities. It is evident that the review and updating of existing standards and guidelines of the Principles of Universal Design is required to bring them in line with the needs of people with accessibility problems and with the future needs of the aging population.

Transportation: accessibility and availability. Bus service, taxis, handy dart, airports, airplanes, full service gas stations, parking spots etc.

Housing Choices: options for independent living. Adaptable locations? Building permits issued using strong Principles of Universal Design?

Safety: emergency preparedness. Do government offices, businesses, schools, organizations have clear evacuation procedures and are they communicated to people with disabilities.

Education: accessible day or night? Personalized education plans? Policies and practices formalized? Fully accessible?

2. Access to Information

Information is power. Basic information, at a very minimum, enables people to: find their way, keep one safe, avoid confusion, help prevent accidents and save time. It can also make people more efficient, punctual and productive. Access to information is so commonplace that it is often taken for granted. People may assume that everyone understands, reads or deciphers words and symbols the way they do.

Discussion centered on examining ways to:

- assess the usability of existing communications, signage, and electronic and information technology
- examine the information and communication needs of persons with disabilities within the community
- Research and offer alternative formats.

Is there sufficient signage and way-finding? Is plain language used? Is large print and Braille, sign language, technology used? Is information available in the formats needed for all disabilities? Are devices used in Government offices for the hearing impaired?

3. Economic Participation

Working and contributing are fundamental to the social and financial wellbeing of everyone. For many people, one of the greatest contributions comes through employment. Yet half of persons with disabilities are unemployed in Canada and almost two thirds of people with disabilities on social assistance live in poverty (below Statistics Canada's low income cut-off).

Discussion centered on examining ways to advance the social and economic independence of citizens with disabilities in the community. Greater economic participation will help to:

- end poverty and increase the security of people with disabilities,
- provide economic alternatives to an exclusive reliance on government benefits, and;
- increase the numbers of individuals employed in Greater Vernon. Are employers actively removing physical, technological and behavioral barriers in Vernon?

4. Community Contribution

People have a deep longing to give, to contribute, to offer and to share what is meaningful to them. Such contributions are the backbone of communities. They contribute to the common good, allow us to fulfill our obligations to our fellow citizens and give us a sense of self worth. Most of all, contributions foster civic belonging, and make people feel valued.

Discussion centered on examining ways to enable:

- highlight the untapped gifts of citizens with disabilities in the community,
- welcome the participation of all individuals with disabilities in every aspect of civic life,
- adopt strategies for ensuring everyone's gift is given (i.e. connecting persons with disability with people who share the same interests), and
- foster a more dynamic, caring community.

In particular, we discussed the following venues:

Cultural facilities: The Vernon & district Performing Arts Centre, Vernon Art Gallery, The Powerhouse Theatre, The Library, The Museum

Recreation and Sport: The Vernon Recreation Centre, fitness centres, The Wesbild Centre, sport or team organizations, Silver Star Mountain Resort, Sovereign Nordic Ski.

Environment: Parks, Beaches, Camps, Trails, Recycling depots.

CONCLUSIONS

People who live with disabilities or who live with socio-economic barriers face insurmountable challenges every day of their lives. Physical, attitudinal and financial barriers can be debilitating and we as a community need to and can make a difference.

The community effort to put this report together has been overwhelmingly positive and generous in the willingness to make a difference in Vernon.

We are grateful to 2010 Legacies Now and the Province of British Columbia for its vision and support of this project.

The leadership support from the City of Vernon and illustrated in their resolution and in the Official Community Plan is to be commended. We recognize that the recommendations in this report will contribute to making Greater Vernon a more livable city, a more attractive tourist destination, and a more “green” sustainable community.

We acknowledge that many of the recommendations in this report need substantial funds and that budgets are allocated according to a variety of priorities. However there are many recommendations that require little or no funding. Many repairs or improvements to city streets and city walks are design changes or as simple as adding yellow paint to a curb. Attitudinal changes can also occur without a cost and significantly benefit everyone.

We also recognize changes and improvements take time due to budget constraints and priorities. We ask that over the next couple of years that officials with the City of Vernon, with RDNO, with Business Associations, with School District 22, and business owners, consult this report and **Independent Living Vernon** on a variety of projects and keep **Accessibility and Inclusion for People with Disabilities on the radar.**

The support shown by business representatives was extraordinary and we hope to see positive change in the near future. Business will need to contribute significantly to this initiative in terms of improvements to their

premises and contribute to the 10 x 10 Challenge to increase employment levels 10 % by 2010.

The consultations process was extensive with several meetings and focus groups and all disability groups consulted. There was an enormous willingness to listen and to understand the needs of people with disabilities.

Some organization representatives came from Kamloops and Kelowna to share their expertise. Many initiatives have come to the forefront as a result of this project and partnering and coalitions have developed.

We look forward to a continued action-oriented process with all stakeholders to realize all the efforts and recommendations made.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Recommendation for Improvements to Business Premises:

Business improvements:	Improvements needed
Businesses in General	Businesses offering goods or services could see financial growth if they made their premises more accessible. People need to be able to manoeuvre easily down aisles, through clothing racks, around tables, displays, office furniture etc.
London Drugs	Widen the aisles and eliminate clutter and hazards
Canadian Tire	Remove turn style device at entrance. Widen the aisles and eliminate clutter and hazards. Add more parking for people with disabilities with upright signage.
Vernon Taxi	Numerous complaints about poor customer service (rudeness, hanging up on clients, arriving from 10 minutes to over an hour late and insisting that clients wait outside in the heat or snow).
Tim Horton's (all 4)	Add automatic door openers, and enlarge sidewalks to access

The Bay	Install automatic door opener at all entrances
Fruit Union Plaza, Highway 6 and 32 Street	More graded cut-out ramps to access the mall sidewalk.
Bean Scene, 30 th Ave	Remove steps or reconfigure front entrance. Install accessible washroom. Back alley entrance only and washrooms downstairs.
Fitness West	Add more designated parking spots for people with disabilities
Future Shop	Add more designated parking spots for people with disabilities
Maharoba Restaurant, 30 th Ave	Create smoother flooring to provide access to the accessible washroom.
Gas Stations	Need Accessible washrooms. Need full service gas stations to provide serving to customers with a disability during open hours. These stations need to have more than one person on staff.
Okanagan School of Massage, 30 th Ave building	Entrance door needs an automatic door opener. Building has been “grandfathered”.
Towne Theatre, 30 th Ave	Ramp at entrance (back alley is not inclusive). Needs accessible washrooms
Atlantis Waterslides	Needs access to top of slides. Needs large, accessible family washrooms and change rooms.
Apple Lane Restaurant	Needs an automatic door opener.
Dr Friesen’s Office	The handicapped parking spots are located on a sloped section of the parking lot making use

101-3601 31 st Vernon	of the wheelchair lift dangerous.
Starbucks and all businesses	Install automatic openers at entrance doors. Businesses will benefit by increased business by people in walkers, wheelchairs, with canes, strollers etc.
Interior Bottle Depot, 24 th Ave	Extend pavement up to recycling bins to enable people in a walking device can access the bins.
Creekside Medical Building	Requires upgrades to make it more accessible
Predator Ridge Restaurant	Front entrance access. Currently it is at the side of the Clubhouse and locked.
Silver Star Mountain Resort	Requires improvements for people with mobility impairments, including accessible washrooms, ramps, paved paths in the village and designated parking.
Restaurants and stores	Many have accessible washrooms but floor and spatial obstacles inhibit people with disabilities from accessing the washrooms
Banks, cash counters, medical office counters	Lower counters to provide a more welcoming atmosphere and provide counter space for personal belongings.
Seven Day Adventist Church	Need a way to access lower floor from the main floor without having to use the outer door.
Centre Point Apartments	Make accessible to wheelchairs
Welk Mart	Unclutter the aisles

APPENDIX B

Suggestions for Appropriate & Respectful Language & Helpful Hints when speaking with People with Disabilities

Instead of ...	Please say...
Normal or Healthy	Able Bodied
Handicap/ Handicapped	Person with a Disability
Disabled/lame/ Handicapped/ Cripple/Physically Challenged	Person with a Disability (PWD)
Disabled change room	Change room for a PWD
Stricken/Suffers from...	Person who has...
Blind Person who is	Visually Impaired/ Person who is blind
Insane/Crazy/Nuts/ Mad/Loony Disability	Person with a Mental Health
Mental/Mentally-Retarded/Retard/ Disability	Person with a Developmental
Retarded Deaf &/or Dumb Impediment	Person with a Hearing or Speech
Confined to a Wheelchair Impaired /Wheelchair-Bound	Wheelchair User or Mobility-

When conversing with a person who uses a wheelchair or scooter, **position yourself** so that you are at eye level in front of the person to facilitate the conversation. It is preferable to sit or crouch down, when possible. **Focus on the person**, not on his or her disability.

Be aware of **what is and what is not accessible** to a person who uses mobility devices. Rearrange furniture if there is something blocking the person's path.

Offer to tell where accessible restrooms, telephones, & water fountains are located; making sure that the **path** to these is **unobstructed** both vertically & horizontally.

Most people with vision loss do not use Braille, & not all hearing impaired people use sign language. Prepare to present any important information in **large-print** or **audio formats**.

Ensure that **signage** uses large type (18-pt), is bright, high in contrast, & at a level or angle that is **visible to all**.

Provide level access to your premises; if level access is not possible, ramps are a good alternative.

Make sure **doors are wide**, automated, opened, or made lighter to allow wheelchair & walker access.

Act naturally. Do not be afraid to use phrases like "I am going for a walk", "I have to run" or "see you later!" People with disabilities or impairments say these things too.

Have a pen & paper ready to jot down a message for a hearing impaired person.

Do not assume that a person using a manual wheelchair needs to be pushed. Ask before giving any assistance.

When addressing the person with mobility impairment who has a companion or attendant, **engage directly** with the person with a disability.

If you are able-bodied, **leave accessible parking places** for those who need them. Likewise, do not park in the hatch marks of accessible spaces. These areas are to allow safe operation of vehicle lifts.

Do not make assumptions about what a person can or cannot do, based on his/her disability. All people with disabilities are not alike, & have a wide variety of skills & personalities.

Reduce overall noise in your establishment to help those with hearing impairments, especially background music; hearing aids amplify all sounds equally.

Don't pet guide dogs or other service animals...they are working.

Provide seating options throughout your establishment, especially outside fitting rooms, or where someone is likely to have to wait for a while.

About 10% of North Americans have a condition that could be considered an invisible disability. **Be considerate & patient with your customers.**

Train your staff to provide good & understanding customer service to persons with a disability.

When posting material on the World Wide Web, **use the guidelines** provided by the Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI). www.w3.org/WAI/

How to Speak to People with Hearing Impairments in “Quiet Environments”

Such as in the Vernon Library, the Vernon Public Art Gallery, the Vernon and District Performing Arts Centre, waiting rooms etc.

When speaking to someone with a hearing loss:

1. Face the listener directly. Do not turn away in the middle of a remark or story. Make sure the listener can see your face easily and that a good light is on you.
2. Talk at a moderate rate.
3. Keep your voice at about the same volume through each sentence, without dropping the voice at the end.
4. Always speak as clearly and accurately as possible. Consonants, especially, should be articulated with care.
5. Do not over-articulate, i.e. mouthing or over-doing articulation is just as bad as mumbling.
6. Pronounce every name with care. Make a reference to the name for easier understanding, as Joan “the girl from the office” or Joe “the fellow from the diner”.
7. Change to a new subject at a slower rate, making sure that the person follows the change to the new subject. A key word or two at the beginning of a new topic is a good indicator.
8. Do not attempt to speak while you have something in your mouth, such as a pipe, cigar, cigarette, or chewing gum. Do not cover your mouth with your hand.
9. Talk in a normal tone of voice. Shouting does not make your voice more distinct. In some instances shouting makes it more difficult for a hard-of-hearing person to understand.

Today, there are many assistive listening devices that can be used to improve the ability to hear for Canadians i.e. large area listening systems (such as at the PowerHouse Theatre, Performing Arts Centre), personal listening systems, volume amplified telephones, alerting systems to name a few.

Today's statistics show that:

- 1 in 4 Canadians report having a hearing loss;
- 8 in 10 Canadians have worked with or have family or friends with deafness or hearing loss;
- 1 in 6 Canadians would rather live with hearing loss than use a hearing aid;
- 1 in 8 people avoid dealing with someone who is hard of hearing;
- Average age of those experiencing hearing loss is 51 – nearly 1 in 4 are under age 40 and 7 in 10 are under age 60.

Most people lose their hearing slowly, over a 15-20 year period. Typically the first sound to be affected by hearing loss are the higher frequencies which are the most common sounds spoken in the English language such as p, s, f, t and d and sh, ch, h and soft c.

This information is courtesy of Val Bedard with Hear Well Services Ltd. For more information contact 250-549-3294 or email info@hearwell.ca, or contact Independent Living Vernon.

APPENDIX C

Principles of Universal Design

Principles of Universal Design are defined by the Centre for Universal Design as:

1. Equitable Use: The design is useful and marketable to any group of users.
2. Flexibility in Use: The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.
3. Simple and Intuitive Use: use of the design is easy to understand.
4. Perceptible Information: The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user.
5. Tolerance for Error: The design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintentional actions.
6. Low Physical Effort: the Design can be used efficiently and comfortably.
7. Size and Space for approach and Use: Appropriate size and space is provided for approach and use.

Source: <http://www.design.ncsu.edu/cud/>

Why are some facilities accessible and others less so, or not at all?

The most common reasons are:

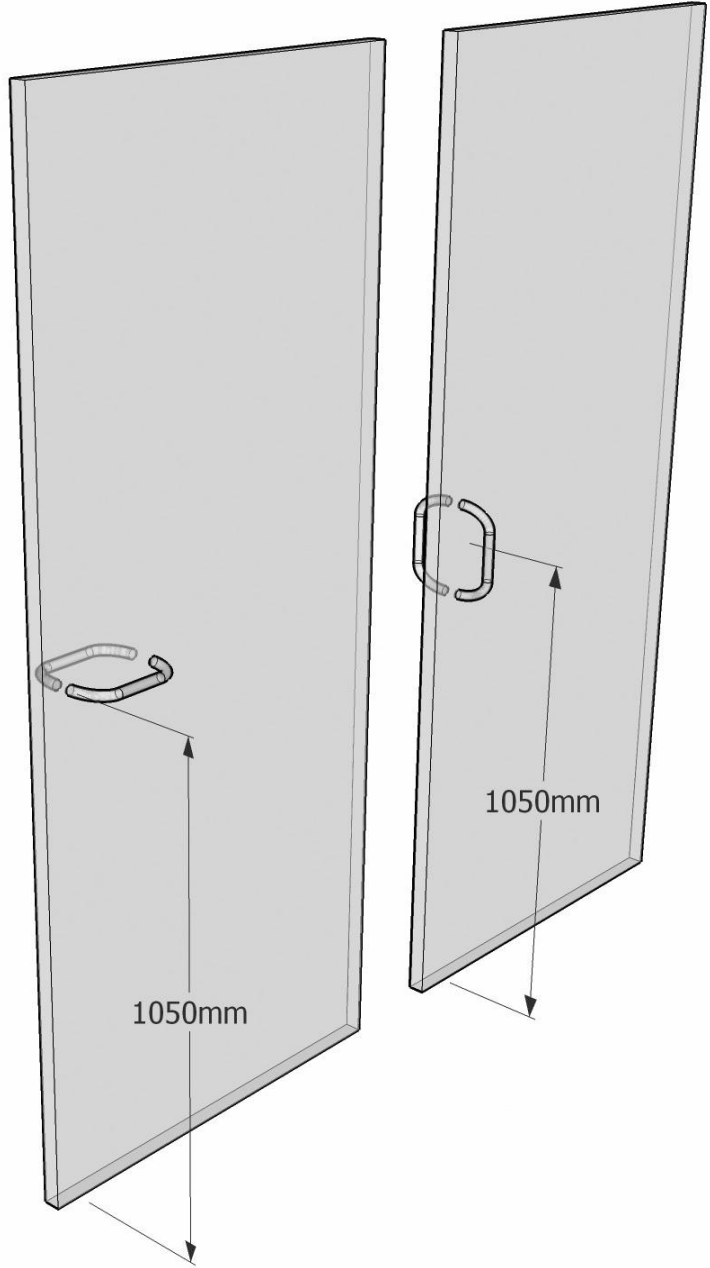
1. The voluntary nature of the standards, unless adopted by a government is one of many loopholes that allows construction of barrier-prone facilities. Unfortunately it is the cost of doing business to the detriment of people with a variety of disabilities.
2. In order to protect businesses from financial hardships, the barrier-free requirements of building codes cover only new construction or major renovations. Older buildings are often exempt from meeting accessibility standards and guidelines until they are due for major renovations.
3. Building codes, standards and guidelines often recommend the minimum accessibility standards acceptable. There is no incentive for the architect/construction company to provide more than this minimum. This is possibly due to the limited awareness of architects and designers and the possible additional costs involved. Awareness training of both designers and project sponsors is essential.
4. Since national, provincial, municipal codes may differ, the accessibility provided may differ substantially even though the facilities constructed/renovated may all be in the same city.

Universal Design Barrier-Free Access: Guidelines for Persons with Hearing Loss, Canadian Hard of Hearing Association, 2008

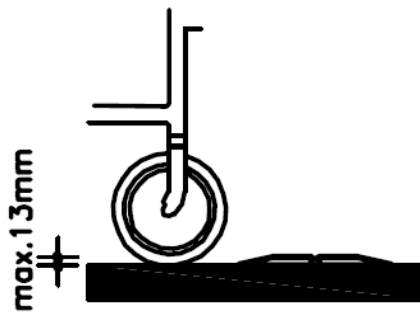
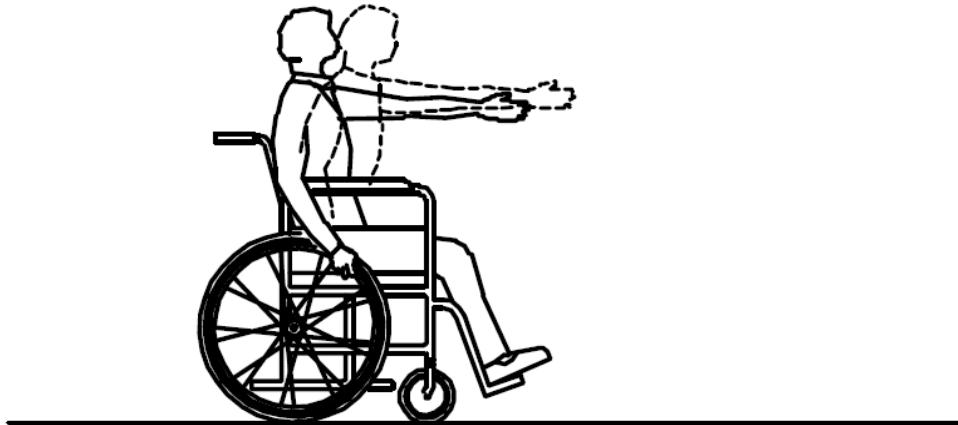
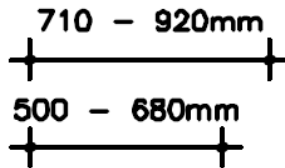
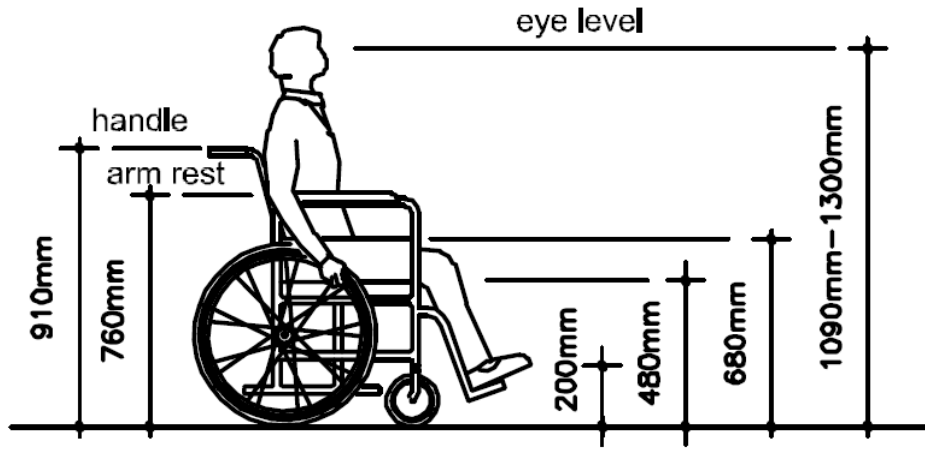
Appendix D

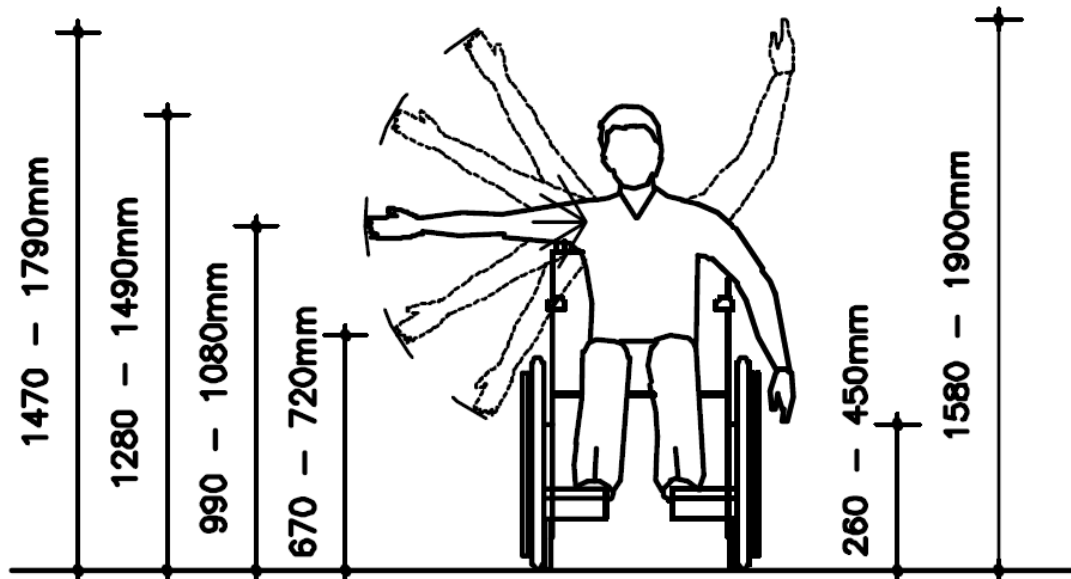
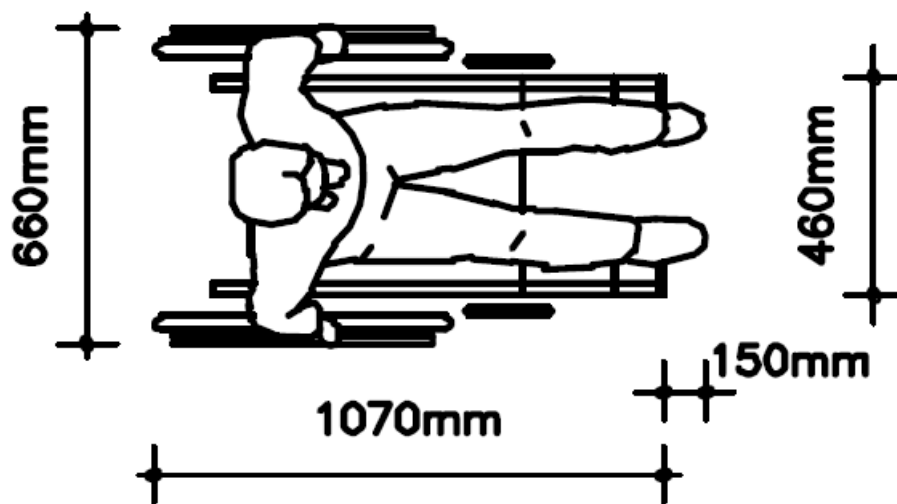
Diagrams for Accessibility

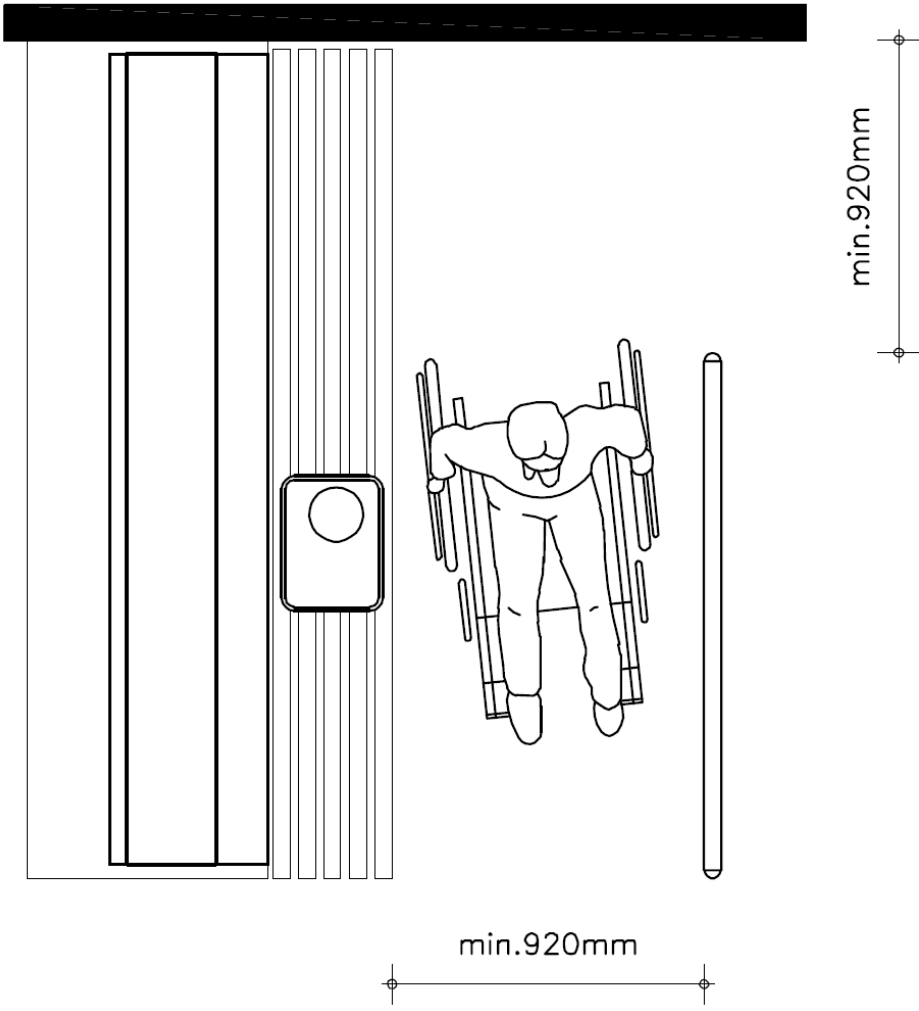
Courtesy of Powell River, Business & Assess Guide for Persons with Disabilities www.praccess.ca, and Independent Living, Vernon.



Door knob Height

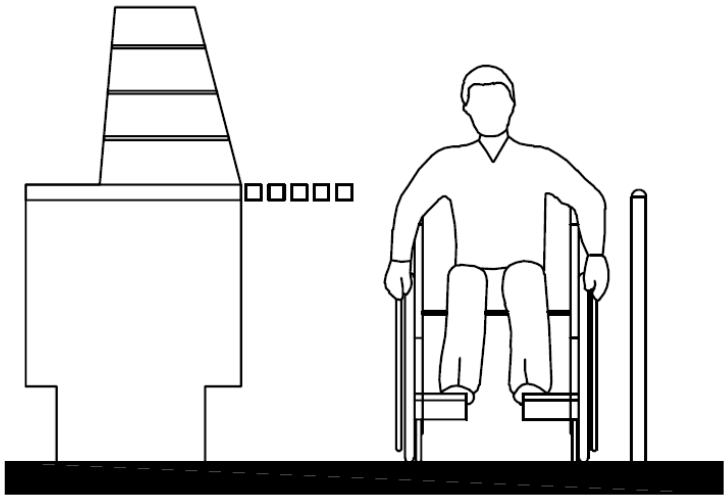




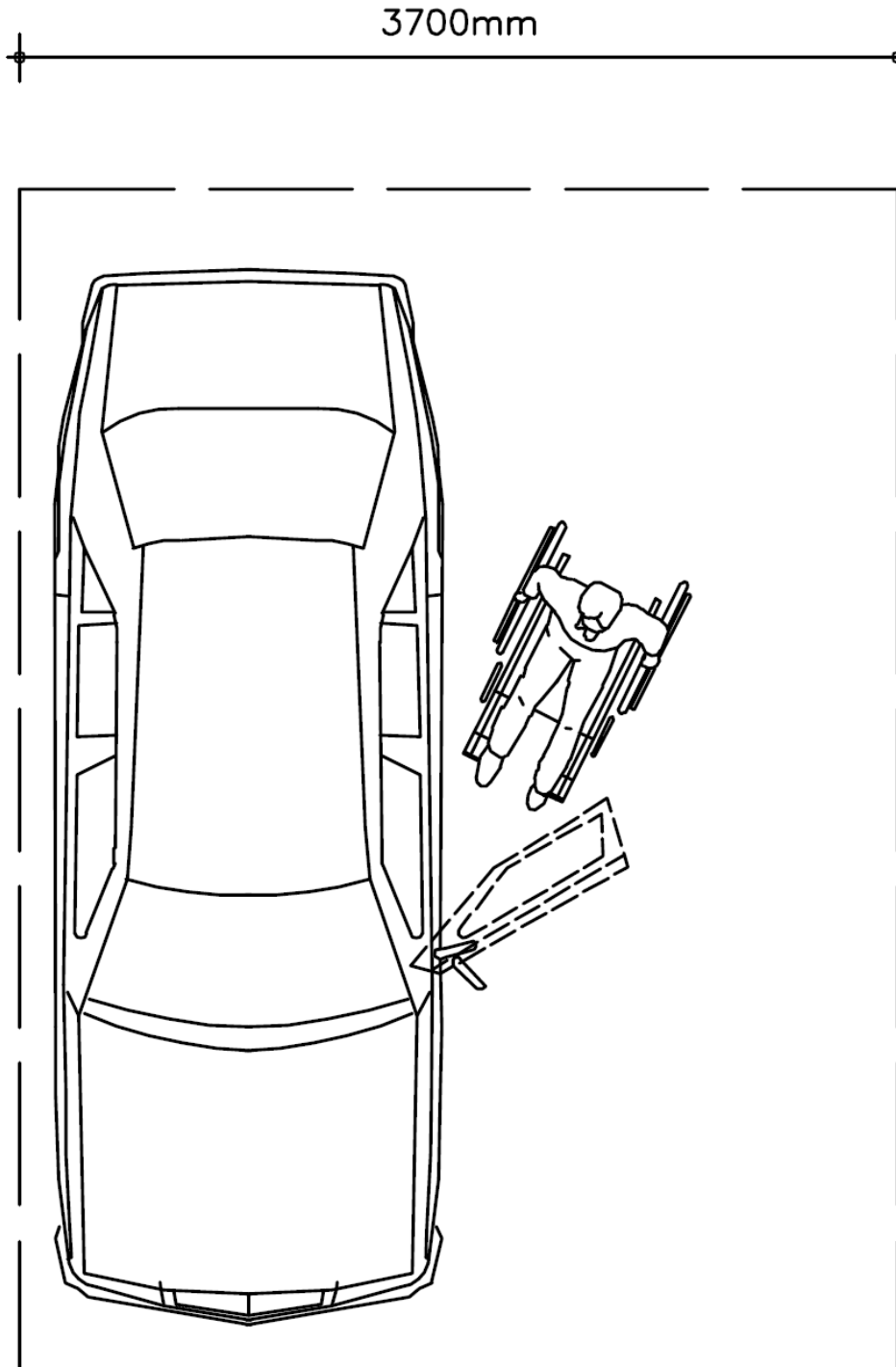


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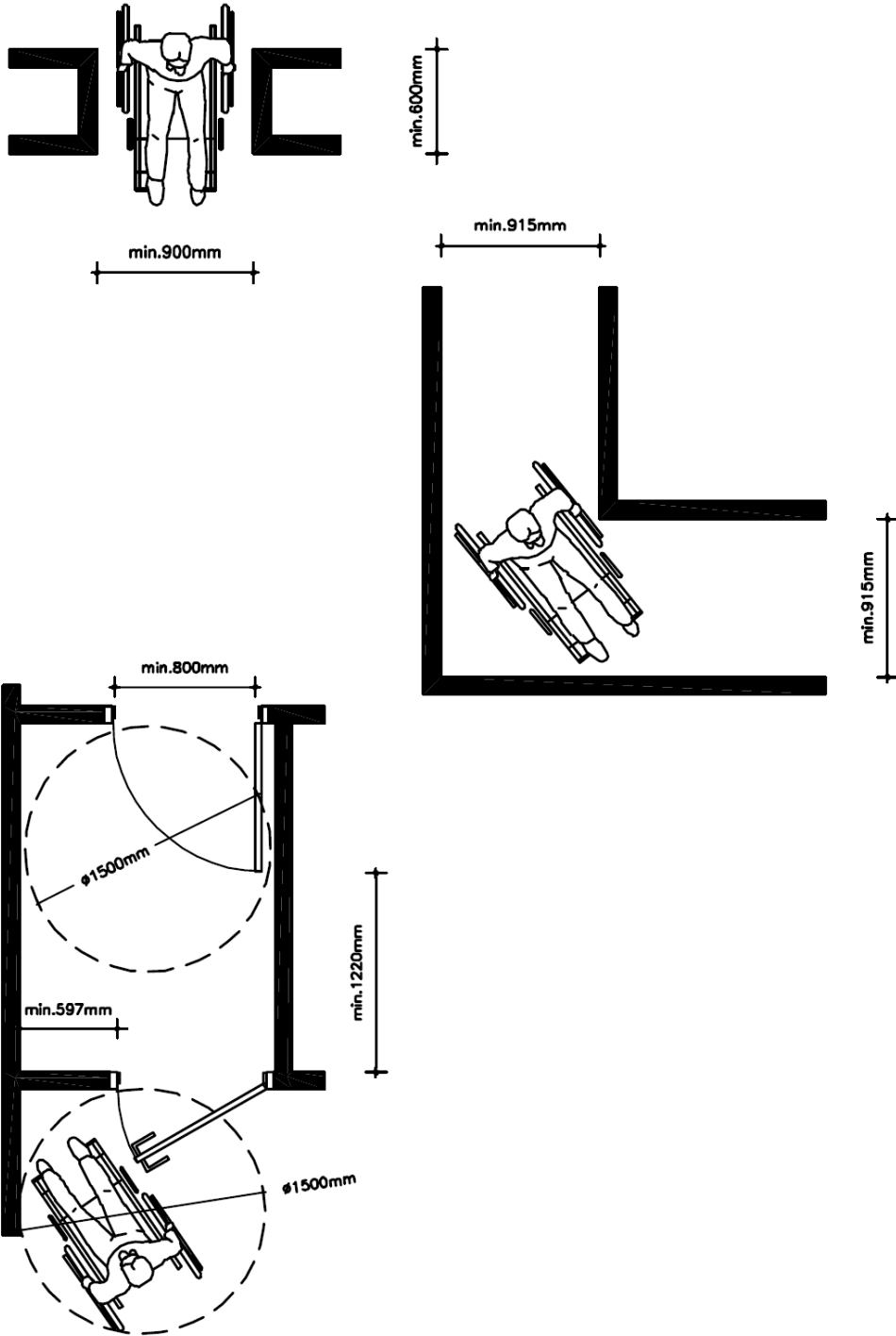
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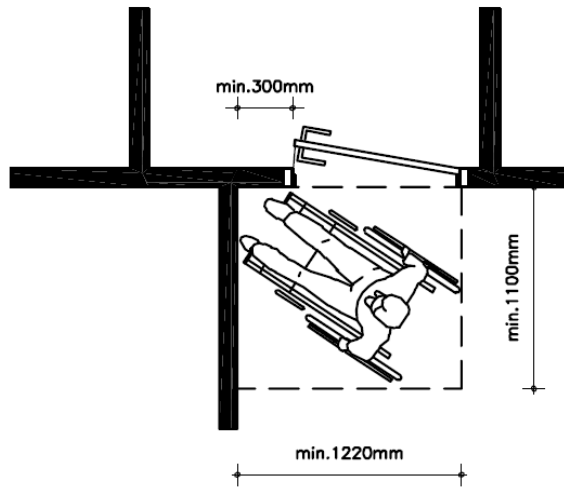
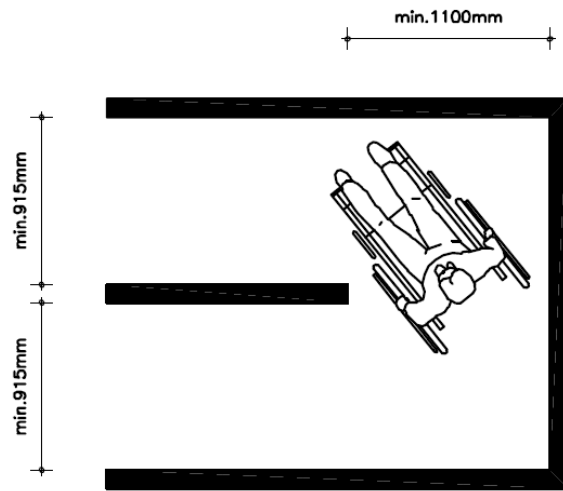
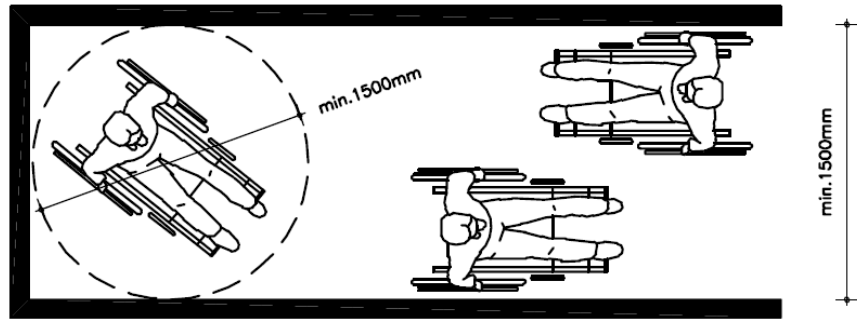


Parking



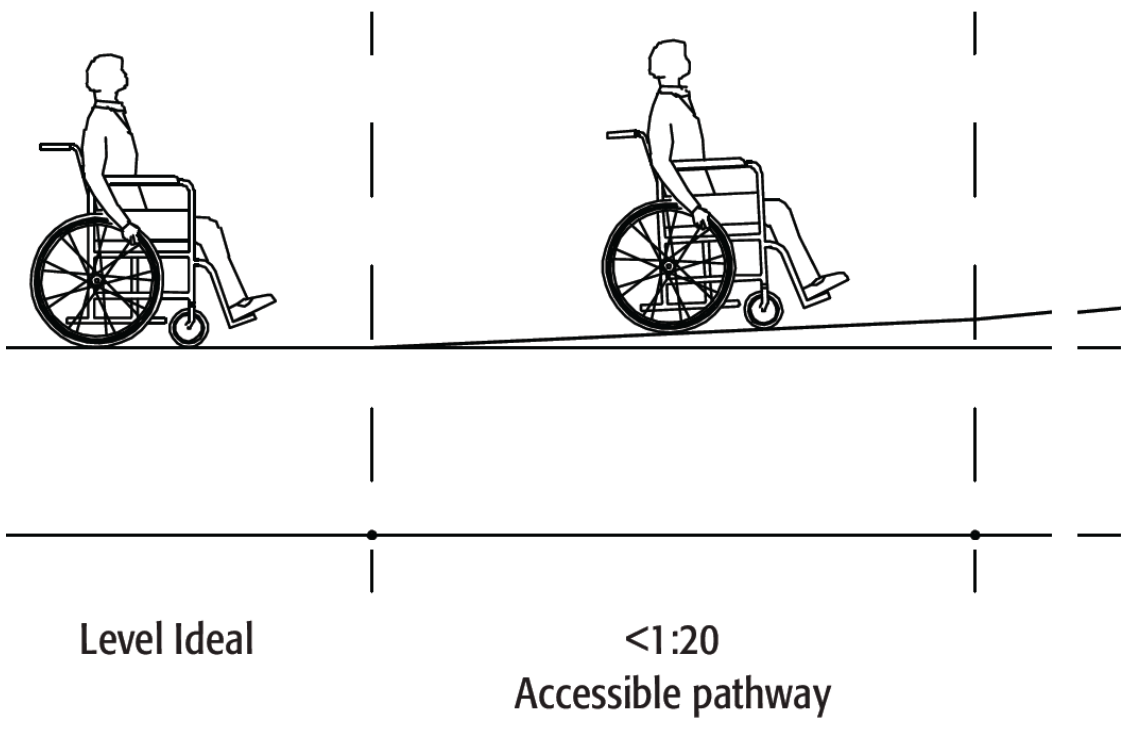
Hallways





Ramp Specifications

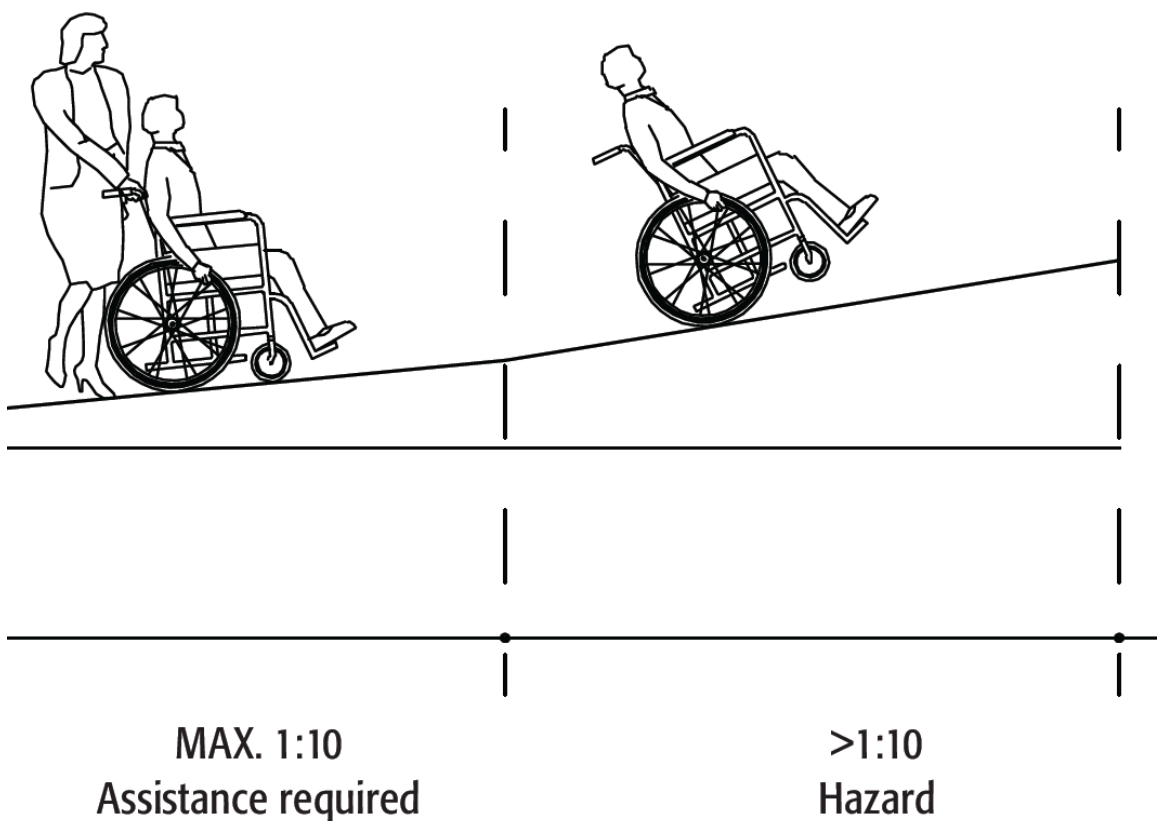
Maximum Slope	Maximum Length	Maximum Height	Minimum Width	Handrails
1 : 20	None	None	920 mm or 36 inches	None
1 : 16	12000 mm or 40 feet	750 mm or 30 inches	920 mm or 36 inches	Handrails on 2 sides if over 2000 mm or 80 inches
1 : 12	9000 mm or 30 feet	750 mm or 30 inches	920 mm or 36 inches	Handrails on 2 sides if over 2000 mm or 80 inches



- The slope of the ramp should be as gentle as possible. The steeper the ramp, the more likely persons in wheelchairs will require some assistance.
- The slope should be no steeper than 1:12. This means a rise of 300 mm (12 inches) for every 3660 mm (144 inches or 12 feet) or ramp length.
- The maximum cross slope of the ramp is 1:50.

If the ramp is not adjacent to a wall, an edge protection is required:

- A curb with a minimum height of 75 mm (3 inches)
- A raised barrier with its lower edge not more than 75 mm (93 inches) from the ramp.
- A rail with the bottom edge not more than 75 mm (3 inches) from the ramp.



Landings

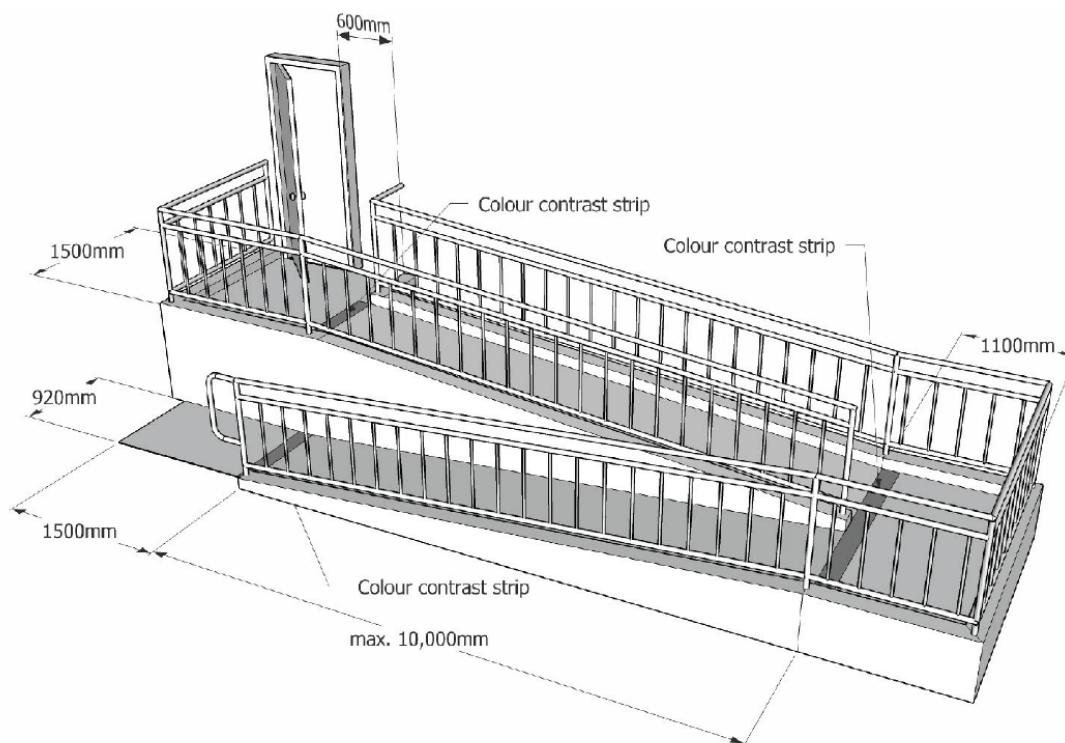
Landings should be available:

- At the top and bottom of the ramp.
- Whenever there is a change in the direction of a ramp

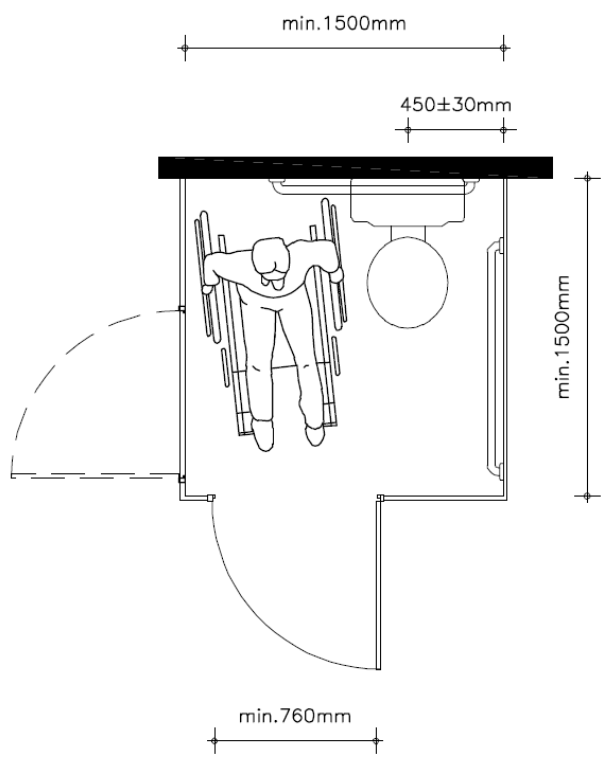
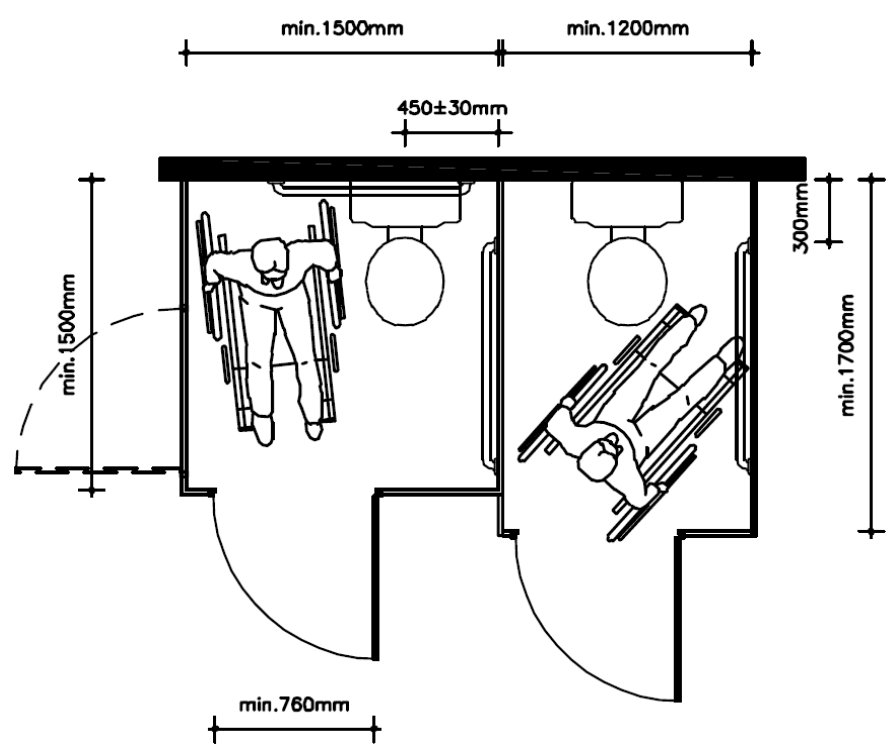
The landing should:

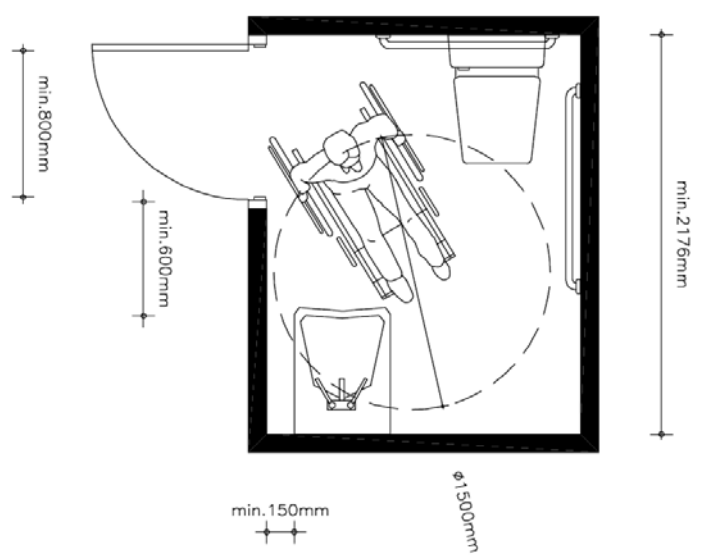
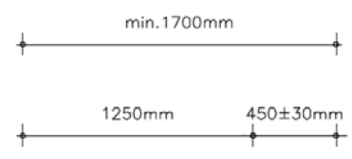
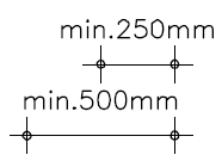
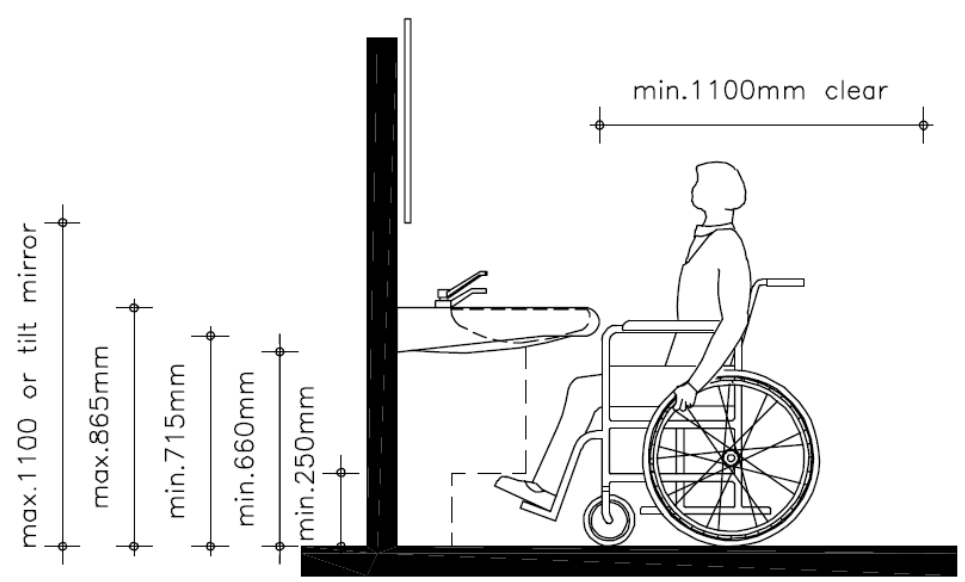
- Be at least as wide as the widest ramp run leading to it
- Have a minimum length of 1500 mm (59 inches).
- Have a minimum size not less than 15000 mm x 15000 mm (59 inches x 59 inches) if served by a doorway.

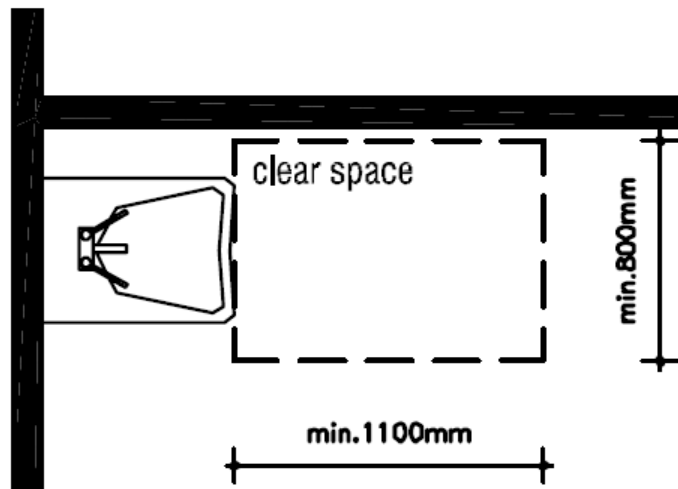
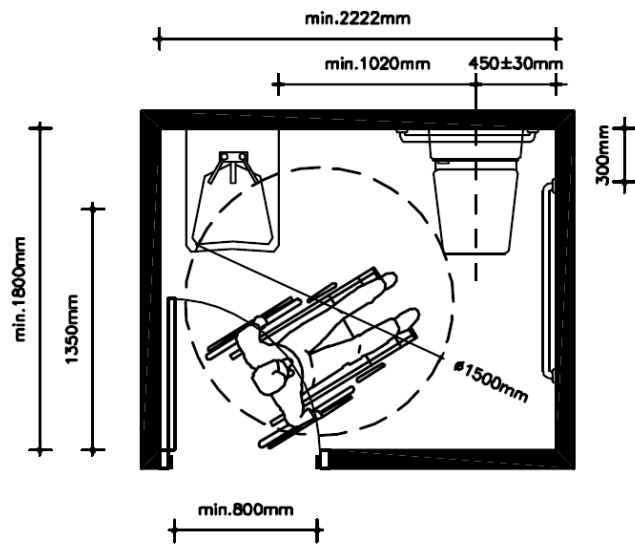
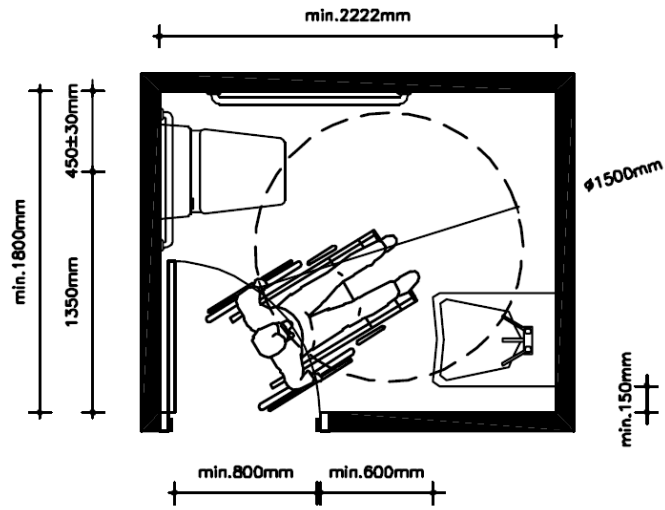
Source: Accessible Design for the Built Environment, Registered trade-mark of Canadian Standards Association, 2004, Ontario.



Washrooms







APPENDIX E

Glossary/Definitions

Accessible – free of barriers, open to all.

Adaptable housing – homes designed to adapt to the needs of inhabitants through all the stages of life. Such homes can easily be modified to accommodate people with a range of needs.

Built environment – all buildings, roads, walls, plazas and other spaces or structures created by people.

Dialogue – a process of consultation involving people with disabilities.

Inclusive – welcoming and enabling participation from everyone.

Inclusive skills training – training that is normally available to all members of the public and teaches a marketable skill.

Personal education plan – a plan based on competent professional evaluation of a student to guide the learning program for that student and identify any supports that are needed.

Individualized funding – funding that is directed by the person who needs it to acquire the products or services that meet their individual needs.

Multiple formats – providing information in a variety of communication forms (large print, Braille, American Sign Language) to make it accessible to people with diverse needs.

Personal supports – any supports needed by an individual. Includes the services of attendants or caregivers, equipment such as wheelchairs and assistive devices such as lifts.

Plain language – an approach to designing and creating communications that are understandable by the people who will use them.

Regionally significant languages – languages that are the first language for a large proportion of people living in a particular area.

Universal design – an approach to designing anything (e.g. buildings, products, web sites) that ensures it is useful for anyone.

APPENDIX F

Participants, Community Consultations, Resources

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Georgina Rubner, Counsellor, Theo BC, Vernon

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Leslee Scott, Rehabilitation Counsellor, WIDHH

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Mayor Wayne Lippert, City of Vernon

Buffy Baumbrough, Councilor, City of Vernon

Juliette Cunningham, Councilor, City of Vernon

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Sheila, Meridian Rehabilitation

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Crystal Compton, Youth Opportunities Unlimited Groups and RESP Coordinator, Independent Living Vernon

Debbie Vaughan, Integration Manager, Ministry of Housing and Social Development

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Sandy Coolidge, Interested Citizen, Vernon

Serle Schoenberger, Consumer, Independent Living Vernon

Lars Taylor, Consumer and Occupational Therapist

Les Ebl, Board Member, Independent Living Vernon

Laura Hockman, Executive Director, Independent Living Vernon

Angie Ferraro, Family Member of mental and physical disability, Practicum Student, Independent Living Vernon

Carol Thiesen, Volunteer, social Planning Council

Linda Godal, Board Chair, Independent Living Vernon

Twylla Genest, Manager, Volunteer Bureau, and representing Dayle Drury

Sonja Gaudet, Paralympian, Spinal cord injury consumer

Egan Mandreck, Consumer, Independent Living Vernon

Kyla Kongsdorf, Consumer Youth and Volunteer Independent Living Vernon

Angie Babchuk, Youth Consumer, Independent Living Vernon

Stacey Madden, Consumer, Independent Living Vernon

David Youth Consumer Independent Living Vernon

Al McNiven, Director, Parks, Recreation & Culture, Regional District North Okanagan, Vernon

Doug Ross, Manager, Recreation Services, City of Vernon

Rosemary O'Neal, President & Manager, Vernon senior Citizens' Recreation Society – Halina Centre

Penny Bliss, Consumer, Vernon

Val Bedard, Hear Well Services Ltd

Jason McIntyre, Braintrust Canada Association

Lawrence Berg, Centre for Social Spatial and Economic Justice, Kelowna

Pat Black, North Okanagan Falls Prevention Program, Vernon

Tanis Campbell, Vernon

Rachelle Hole, UBC

Chantelle Fairbrother, Employment Advisor, Access to Employment

Gordon McClure, Chairperson District of North Okanagan Hepatitis Support Group

Gail Kerr, Member, District of North Okanagan Hepatitis Support Group

And others. We recognize that we may have inadvertently omitted someone's contribution and would like to correct the error. Please contact mtlovsin@telus.net.

Resources

2010 Legacies Now: Measuring Up,
http://www.2010legaciesnow.com/measuring_up/

Access Richmond, City of: <http://www.accessrichmond.ca/index.html>

Community Recreational Initiatives: Outdoor Pursuits for People with Disabilities, Kelowna, BC, www.coreinso.com

Global Age-Friendly Cities: A Guide by World Health Organization which included a study from Saanich BC

Go For It!: A Guide to choosing and Using Assistive Devices, Ministry of Public Works and Government Services Canada, Government of Canada, 2002

Penticton, Measuring Up Report.

Powell River, Business & Access Guide for Persons with Disabilities,
www.paccess.ca.

Powell River, Model Community Project,
<http://www.modelcommunityproject.ca/access.html>

Preparing for Disasters, a Personal Preparedness Guide for seniors,
Canadian Red Cross

Quesnel, Measuring Up Report

Seniors Information Directory, Vernon and area, 2008-2009

“Shaping Our Community” for Full Citizenship: Participation and Inclusion
for People with Disabilities in the City of Vernon, Independent Living
Vernon, 2004

Universal Design Barrier-Free Access: Guidelines for Persons with Hearing
Loss, Canadian Hard of Hearing Association, 2008