



Access Design Standards Update What We Heard Report Round 2A

Abstract

This report contains a summary of the public participation process, and report back from Round 2A (March – May 2025).



Access Design Standards Update

WWHR Round 2A | 2025

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About this document

To ensure this document is easy for everyone to read, we used accessible formatting aligned with the City of Calgary's communication standards. The document features a user-friendly layout with readable sans serif fonts, plain language, and a navigation pane with clear, structured headings. We kept the use of graphics and tables to a minimum, and when they are included, added alternative text. These choices help make the document accessible to all readers, including those who use assistive technologies.

Land acknowledgement

The city of Calgary sits on fertile land where two rivers meet, where Indigenous Peoples have been gathering for thousands of years, sharing knowledge and storytelling, and planning for future generations. The traditional names for this place we know as Calgary are Moh-kins-tsis, Wîchispa Oyade, Otos-kwunee and Guts-ists'i - the land that has given so much to so many. Calgary is located on the traditional territories of the people of the Treaty 7 region in Southern Alberta. This includes the Blackfoot Confederacy, made up of the Siksika, Piikani, and Kainai First Nations; the Îethka Nakoda Wîcastabi First Nations, comprised of the Chiniki, Bearspaw, and Wesley First Nations; and the Tsuut'ina First Nation. Calgary is also homeland to the historic Northwest Métis and to Métis Nation of Alberta, Region 3. We acknowledge all Indigenous urban Calgarians who have made this city their home. Together, their spiritual and practical relationships to the land create rich lessons for our life as a community.

Access Design Standards (ADS)

The City of Calgary is committed to removing barriers that prevent people with disabilities from fully participating in employment and in all City programs and services. The ADS outline the City's requirements for designing accessible infrastructure. They apply to new and renovated City-built infrastructure including buildings, sidewalks, parks, and transit facilities, as well as City-leased facilities, and any facilities located on City-owned land. The standards enhance accessibility by mandating design measures that exceed the *National Building Code – 2023 Edition*. This update supports greater alignment with national and international best practices and helps ensure City spaces are accessible for people of all abilities.



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Executive summary

The City of Calgary's Access Design Standards Update (ADSU) project aims to strengthen accessibility across all City-owned infrastructure by updating its Access Design Standards (ADS). These standards exceed the *National Building Code – 2023 Edition* and are intended to ensure accessibly designed environments for people with physical, sensory, and cognitive disabilities.

Engagement purpose and process

Round 2A focused on reaching out to targetted groups with lived experience and subject matter experts in Calgary's disability community. These participants shared valuable knowledge based on their personal experiences, professional work, technical skills, or community leadership. This helped the project team better understand real accessibility needs and challenges.

The goal of this round was to learn more about people's priorities and day-to-day experiences, so the updated Access Design Standards (ADS) better reflect what the community needs.

Engagement activities included in-person workshops, online participation, and meetings with City of Calgary committees.

Summary of Feedback

Participants provided detailed feedback on priority sections of the ADS identified by the project team. Overall, they emphasized the need for consistent, inclusive environments where accessibility is embedded into all aspects of public infrastructure. They expressed a desire for:

- Accessibility features that are consistent and centered across public spaces
- Clear and intuitive wayfinding
- Improved infrastructure that reduces barriers
- Expanded washroom and caregiver supports
- Ongoing engagement with people with disabilities throughout the project lifecycle



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Key areas included:

Adult change tables: Strong support for implementing adult change tables in all public facilities with both manual and electric lift options. Additional needs include adequate spacing, caregiver access campaigns, and ongoing consultation with people with disabilities.

Curb ramps and raised crossings: Concerns about steepness, inconsistent design, and tactile warning surfaces (TWSIs). Need for better visibility, smoother transitions, and user-centered planning.

Mobility device parking & storage areas: Wants for secure, accessible, and conveniently located device parking near charging stations. Integration near entrances, washrooms, and other public spaces such as hallways, cafeterias, waiting rooms etc...

Public transportation and recreation: Accessibility gaps in transit shelters, signage, and platform design. Praise for inclusive recreation programs and facilities with tactile and visual cues.

Signage and wayfinding: The need for consistent, tactile, and high-contrast signage and the integration of visual, auditory, and digital navigation aids in public spaces and transit systems.

Touchless power door operators: Desire for multi-sensory cues and inclusive sensor technology. Issues with sensor placement, usability, and weather resilience.

Universal washrooms: Need for consistent layouts, emergency features, and gender-neutral options. Importance of space for caregivers as well as adult change tables.

Outcomes and next steps

Feedback from Round 2A will directly inform revisions to the ADS, ensuring they reflect best practices in accessible design and are clear, user-friendly, and inclusive. An updated Access Design Standards (draft) will then be used in Round 2B of engagement where technical feedback from industry professionals will be sought. The release of the updated ADS is scheduled for 2026.



Access Design Standards Update

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1.0 Project overview

This project aims to update the City's Access Design Standards (ADS), a policy document that guides project managers and external consultants on design and construction requirements for capital projects for new builds or renovations of existing infrastructure within The City of Calgary.

The City of Calgary is committed to removing barriers that prevent people with disabilities from fully participating in employment and in all City programs and services. The [Access Design Standards](#) outline the City's requirements for designing accessible infrastructure. These standards apply to new and renovated City-built infrastructure including buildings, sidewalks, parks, transit facilities, and more, as well as to City-leased facilities, and any facilities located on City-owned land. The standards enhance accessibility by mandating design measures that exceed the *National Building Code – 2023 Edition*. This update supports greater alignment with national and international best practices and helps ensure City spaces are accessible to people of all abilities.

1.1 Goals, objectives and outputs

1.1.1 Goals

- To understand how familiar participants are with the ADS using the current document, identify any gaps in its usage and provide clarity in how the standards are applied.
- Identify gaps and barriers to accessing City infrastructure, with the goal of improving inclusivity.
- Promote awareness and understanding of the Access Design Standards.

1.1.2 Objectives

- **Inclusion of diverse perspectives:** Gather a broad spectrum of insights and experiences from people with disabilities and their caregivers, aiming to ensure that the updates align as closely as possible with their actual needs and preferences.
- **Identification of key issues:** Understanding the most pressing accessibility issues for people with disabilities from the outset helps prioritize the most impactful changes.

- **Build trust and buy-in:** Foster a sense of collaboration and trust, making participants feel valued and heard. This can lead to greater acceptance and support for the final revisions.
- **Avoid redundancies:** By identifying potential issues and solutions early, we avoid making changes that might need further revision later, saving time and resources.

1.1.3 Outputs

- The updated ADS will reflect best practices in accessible and universal design.
- The updated ADS will provide clear explanations and direction for meeting the standards.
- The updated ADS document will be clear, user friendly and accessible.

1.2 Engagement timeline

Q4 2024 – Q1 2025 (Nov. 2024 – Jan. 2025)

Round 1: General outreach and engagement

- Conduct outreach and engagement activities within Calgary's disability community.

Q1 2025 (Mar. – May 2025)

Round 2A: Lived experience outreach and engagement

- Focus on key sections and engage specific groups with lived experience and subject matter experts within Calgary's disability community.

Q4 2025 (Nov. – Dec. 2025)

Round 2B: Industry outreach and engagement

- Meet with industry and technical experts to build on the feedback from Round 2A.

Q1 – Q2 2026 (Mar. – May 2026)

Round 3 Completion and report back

- The ADS goes to Council for approval
- Once approved the updated ADS will be shared with the community.

2.0 Engagement overview

2.1 Impacted and interested parties

This is a list of the participants from Round 2A outreach and engagement:

- Advisory Committee on Accessibility (City of Calgary)
- Access Design Subcommittee (City of Calgary)
- Calgary SCOPE Society
- Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB)
- Cerebral Palsy Association of Alberta
- Deaf & Hear Alberta
- Disability Action Hall
- Spinal Code Injury
- Urban Planners Student Association at the University of Calgary

2.2 Accessible outreach and engagement

This is a list of tactics used in Community Conversations to ensure accessibility:

- Co-creation with participants to reflect their needs and perspectives.
- Ensuring physically accessible locations.
- Furniture arranged to maintain obstacle free paths of travel.
- Sign language interpretation and closed captioning.
- High contrast colors and large, readable fonts.
- Alternative text and verbal descriptions for all images and graphics.
- Slide titles to support screen-reader navigation.
- Presentations and questions shared in advance when possible.
- Clear agendas and structured formats to support comprehension.
- Simplified PowerPoint slides to support neurodiverse participants.
- Plain language, avoiding figurative or abstract terms.
- Provision of multiple ways to communicate (verbal, written, visual, digital).
- Additional staff for greeting, guidance, and assistance.



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The following were also used in a selection of feedback sessions:

Quiet Corner: A calm, low stimulus space. This area included notepads, sticky notes, pens, feedback forms, and fidget tools for comfort and focus.

Feedback Hub: A station with a laptop and staff available to help participants share feedback digitally. This space supported different levels of digital literacy and accessibility needs.

Conversation Corner: A seating area for one-on-one or small group conversations. The layout supported clear communication, including for people using assistive devices or those who prefer less background noise.

Coffee Corner: A refreshment area with snacks and drinks. All items were clearly labeled with ingredients and allergen information when possible. City staff were available to assist as needed.

2.3 Community conversations

We hosted a series of Community Conversations to help update the ADS. Each workshop focused on a specific community, with questions tailored to their needs. Developed in collaboration with partner organizations, these sessions created an inclusive space for people to share their experiences and discuss accessibility. We provided meals and refreshments to support comfort and meaningful dialogue.

We held Community Conversations in person, with online sessions added if needed. Accessible and inclusive tactics, such as physical accessibility features, live captioning, sign language interpretation, visual aids, image descriptions, and written material were provided based on the needs identified by each community. Participants received presentations and questions in advance to help them prepare when possible.

Participants could share their feedback in several ways, such as paper forms, sticky notes, large wall sheets, or digital tools. Venues were set up to be physically accessible, with ramps, wide doorways, clear space to move, resting areas, accessible washrooms, and lighting that supported lip-reading and interpreter visibility. One-to-one discussions were also available.

2.4 Committees

During this round of engagement, the ADSU project team presented and provided regular updates and sought feedback at the Access Design Subcommittee meetings, in collaboration with Community Strategies and the Accessibility Program project team.

2.5 Portal Page

Feedback on the portal page was open from April 1 to May 8, 2025. The portal complemented in-person workshops, allowing those unable to attend, or who preferred online participation, to respond. Each workshop had its own page with tailored questions, including Access Design Sub Committee, CNIB, Cerebral Palsy, Deaf & Hear Alberta, SCOPE, Disability Action Hall, and Spinal Cord Injury. Overall, we received 341 views, 261 visits, and 151 unique visitorsⁱ.

2.6 Participation numbers

The table below shows participation numbers for all Round 2A engagement sessions showing each group, the location of their session, the date it took place, and how many people attended.

Who	Location	Date	Numbers
Online participants	Engage.calgary.ca	Mar. 25 – May 8, 2025	151
Urban Planners Student Association	University of Calgary	Mar. 25, 2025	16
Deaf & Hear Alberta	Deaf & Hear Alberta	Apr. 7, 2025	12
Calgary SCOPE Society	SCOPE Centre	Apr. 15, 2025	20
Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB)	CNIB Offices	Apr. 22, 2025	9
Cerebral Palsy Association	Cerebral Palsy office	Apr. 28, 2025	4
Spinal Code Injury Alberta	Spinal Cord Injury office	Apr. 29, 2025	13
Disability Action Hall	Municipal Building	May 2, 2025	6
Access Design Sub-committee	Online (Zoom)	Mar. 5, 2025; Apr.2, 2025	18

3.0 What we asked

3.1 General questions

Across all engagement sessions, we asked the following general questions:

- What elements in the built environment aid or hinder accessibility overall?
- How can we create standards that meet the different needs of people with various disabilities who might have conflicting requirements?
- How do the ADS contribute to enhancing the built environment to meet accessibility goals?
- What additional measures or changes could further improve accessibility?
- What features or elements do you think are important to ensure accessibility in each of these areas? Areas included: vehicular access, exterior paths of travel, building entrances, interior paths of travel, washrooms, and special interior features.

3.2 Key area questions

The project team also asked a set of key area questions about the features, benefits, and challenges of different access design elements they required feedback on, as noted below.

3.2.1 Adult change tables

- Which types of facilities should provide adult change tables (e.g., arenas, pools, libraries, park washrooms)?
- What is important in the design of washrooms or changing rooms that include adult change tables?
- What experiences have you had with motorized lift change tables or ceiling track change tables?
- In a universal shower and dressing room, are there concerns about having an adult change table that is interchangeable with a change bench?
- Which type do you prefer?

3.2.2 Assistive listening systems (ALS)

- Which types of buildings or facilities should include ALS?

- Where have you been where ALS was not available but would have been helpful?
- In an office building, what percentage of meeting rooms should include ALS?

3.2.3 Curb ramps

- What concerns do you have, if any, about curb ramps (e.g., slopes, clear space at the top, impact of TWSIs)?
- What works well?

3.2.4 Mobility device parking (storage)

- Where should mobility device parking be provided?
- How much space should be provided for parking a mobility device?

3.2.5 Paths of travel

- Beyond clear width and lighting, what else should be considered when designing paths of travel?
- Where should convex mirrors be installed?

3.2.6 Power/Touchless door operators

- Are there any concerns or barriers with power door operators (e.g., height, location, touchless options, round button vs. bar)?
- Do you have any concerns or barriers when using wave sensor touchless door operators?

3.2.7 Public & emergency communication systems

- Where should visual signal devices be installed (e.g., visual smoke alarms in washrooms)?
- What are good examples of providing the same information through text (e.g., theatre performance start times)?
- What general concerns exist about emergency communication?

3.2.8 Raised crossings

- What concerns do you have about raised crossings?
- What works well? What does not work?

3.2.9 Ramps

- What concerns do you have about ramps?
- What works well? What does not work?

3.2.10 Recreation facilities

- How should pool depth text be communicated on pool decks?
- What is your experience with pool depth markings?
- Have you ever used tactile or textured tiles that indicate water depth?

3.2.11 Service dog relief areas (SDRAs)

- Which types of buildings or facilities should include SDRAs?
- Where should they be located?
- Is access to a water source always necessary?

3.2.12 Signage & wayfinding

- What are some good examples of buildings or facilities that have successful signage and wayfinding?
- What features do you think are most important for signage and wayfinding?
- What else is important to know about cohesive wayfinding systems and paths of travel?

3.2.13 Tactile maps

- Which types of buildings, facilities, or open spaces should include tactile maps?
- What are the most important design features to consider when selecting tactile maps?
- Are there any concerns with having tactile maps?
- Can you think of any good examples of tactile maps in Calgary or other cities?

3.2.14 Tactile walking surface indicators (TWSIs)

- Is there anything you would like us to know about Tactile Walking Surface Indicators?

3.2.15 Two-way communication systems

- What is important to consider when selecting a two-way communication system?
- Can you think of examples in Calgary where two-way communication systems work well for people with physical, sensory, or cognitive disabilities?

4.0 What we heard

This section shares what participants told us during outreach and engagement. A summary of key findings is provided in the Executive Summary. The sections that follow provide additional detail on what we heard. The feedback is shown in three different ways to make it easier to explore:

[4.1 General](#) contains a selection of emergent themes across all conversations.

[4.2 Key areas](#) organizes the same feedback by topic, listed alphabetically.

[4.3 Community Conversations](#) groups the feedback by each of the seven engagement sessions.

You may notice overlap between sections. This is intentional. It allows readers to review the feedback by topic or by community, depending on what is most helpful.

4.1 General questions

4.1.2 Overview

- Unclear wayfinding and inconsistent signage.
- Poor or insufficient lighting.
- Inaccessible paths, elevators, and building layouts.
- Seasonal conditions (e.g., snow and ice, flooding, etc..) that increase risks.
- Systemic barriers including cost, safety concerns, and inconsistent policy application.
- Diverse and sometimes competing needs across disability groups.

4.1.3 Recommendations

4.1.3.1 Universal design approaches

- Prioritize intuitive, inclusive layouts that are easy to navigate for people of all abilities and familiarity levels.

4.1.3.2 Infrastructure improvement

- Improve lighting, signage, and resting areas.
- Provide multiple accessible routes to accommodate congestion or large events.

4.1.3.3 Education and awareness

- Co-develop training, campaigns, and resources to build accessibility literacy and reduce stigma among municipal staff, community groups, and service providers.

4.1.3.4 Policy and engagement strategies

- Embed accessibility standards in municipal policy and planning.
- Incentivize organizational participation and maintain ongoing engagement with people with lived experience and subject matter experts.

4.1.3.5 Enhancing the built environment

- Accessibility issues in public spaces come from things like complicated designs, poor lighting, too few places to rest, and confusing signs.
- Physical barriers can be curbs or uneven pathways. Mental barriers could be anxiety or sensory overload.
- Improving the built environment can boost local economic activity, support mental health, strengthen sustainability, improve transit access, and help people feel more connected to their community.

4.1.3.6 Meeting the diverse needs of people with disabilities

Participants described challenges in balancing budget constraints with the diverse and sometimes conflicting needs across disability groups. They emphasized the importance of:

- Applying universal design where possible to benefit the widest range of users
- Using exclusive or specialized design where universal approaches are insufficient
- Prioritizing user-centered planning
- Offering incentives for accessibility improvements
- Increasing education to improve understanding of different accessibility needs and perspectives

4.1.3.7 Additional measures

Additional measures identified by participants included:

Governance and accountability

- Transparent decision-making processes

- Feedback loops that ensure responsive and ongoing improvement

Design and infrastructure enhancements

- Improved curb and sidewalk design
- Enhanced lighting
- Reliable and timely snow and ice removal
- Adequate shelter and protective infrastructure

Policy and Advocacy

- Alignment with federal and provincial accessibility standards
- Incentives to support accessibility upgrades
- Public education campaigns promoting inclusive practices

4.2 Key area questions

4.2.1 Adult change tables

Adult change tables are needed in all major public spaces and events. Ideally have both manual and electric lift options (e.g., motorized and ceiling), along with supply tables and adjustable benches. Installations must allow for adequate space, caregiver access, maneuverability, and height adjustability. Addressing maintenance, misuse, and consistent availability across public facilities is also needed.

4.2.2 Assistive listening systems (ALS)

Currently identified barriers to using ALS are that staff may not know how to use ALS. Equipment may be hidden or poorly maintained and retrofitting older buildings is costly. High-use areas such as City recreation facilities need Bluetooth Assistive Systems and staff trained in their use to meet people with accessibility needs.

4.2.3 Curb ramps & ramps

Many curb ramps and ramps remain too steep or are missing entirely, emphasizing the need for user involvement in planning. Curb ramps and ramps should include wide paths, rest areas, proper landings, smooth surfaces, color contrast, and the avoidance of blended transitions. In some cases, Tactile Walking Surface Indicators (TWSI) can cause discomfort for users.

4.2.4 Emergency communication

Enclosed spaces such as washroom stalls or elevators should include visual and auditory alerts (e.g., digital screens and buzzer-style notifications). Closed captioning, visual emergency alerts and audible cues should be incorporated in all public spaces and service points.

4.2.5 Mobility device parking (also known as mobility device storage areas)

There were concerns about device failure stranding users [due to lack of charging stations], as well as lack of security when leaving devices unattended while charging. Improvements should include designated indoor and close-proximity device parking (storage) with space for larger devices. Charging stations are needed near washrooms and meeting points. Clear signage, companion seating options, and structured layouts enhance usability.

4.2.6 Parks and recreation facilities

Recreation facilities should have tactile paths and signage in pools, bathrooms, and change rooms. Audio cues along and trained staff would also improve accessibility. Participants indicated positive recreation features such as tactile pool edges, accessible hot tubs, and outdoor inclusive programs such as Wolf Trailsⁱⁱ. Facilities with flat designs (e.g., VRI pool and Riley performance space) were praised for their accessibility. Participants also highlighted the need for more seating near parking, accessible trails, and adaptive equipment near transit.

4.2.7 Paths of travel

Ground markers (e.g., painted design going into City Hall) are helpful for navigation, but obstacles like poles and advertising boards can impede movement. There also needs to be improved clarity in signage for detours and walking trails, as well as in the LRT.

4.2.8 Public transportation

Many accessibility concerns were for public transportation including inadequate tactile strips on both buses and paths of travel, inaccessible help buttons, poor shelter design, and unsafe platform edges. Participants cited long distances to entrances, malfunctioning doors, and limited space for turning mobility devices. Drop-off locations should connect directly to crosswalks.

4.2.9 Raised crossings

Elevation changes were the most reliable indicators of street crossings, particularly when paired with tactile lines, contrasting colours and detectable slopes for safety. While raised crossings are helpful for pedestrians, improvements are still needed in driver awareness.

4.2.10 Seating areas

Seating areas and companion seating should be added in key public areas such as airports, parks, and near sports fields. There should be designated space for mobility devices and supportive features like flat benches and backrests.

4.2.11 Sensory & quiet spaces

Sensory and quiet spaces are needed in public venues (e.g. libraries and zoos). They should be clearly signed, semi-private, and thoughtfully monitored to ensure appropriate use and accessibility.

4.2.12 Service dog relief areas

Service dog relief areas should be available at all public buildings. Participants expressed a preference for cleanliness and adequate space over water sources. Portable options that are currently available are often inadequate or not feasible.

4.2.13 Sharps containers

Sharps containers should be placed in safe and accessible locations such as beside washroom sinks, with signage for them. Placing them behind toilets is not accessible. They are needed in frequented areas such as in transit stations and public washrooms for safe disposal.

4.2.14 Signage and wayfinding

Challenges and barriers associated with signage and wayfinding:

- Signs and navigation cues are often hard to find or notice when they aren't placed consistently or use unclear audio/visual signals.
- Wayfinding apps can be incomplete or not fully accessible for people who are blind, have low vision, or are Deaf or hard of hearing.
- Inconsistent or outdated signage, illogical elevator connections, and crowding, especially at events—make navigation harder.

- Effective wayfinding needs consistent standards, including inclusive symbols, international signage practices, color-coded paths, and clear audio, visual, and tactile cues.
- Tactile signage and strong audio/visual indicators are especially important in large spaces like malls and store entrances.
- Paper maps should be available, and digital tools should integrate with accessible apps (e.g., Seeing AI, Aira, BlindSquare, GoodMaps).
- Signs should be visible above crowds, readable from a distance, in plain language, and include street names, directions, arrows, and “You Are Here” markers.
- Strong examples of wayfinding include the Central Library, CNIB, Roam Transit, YVR, the University of Lethbridge, and MRU. Poor examples include Plus 15 routes to Arts Commons and municipal buildings, downtown areas, recreation facilities, LRT stations, and detour routes.

4.2.15 Tactile maps

- Participants shared concerns that tactile maps are often damaged, outdated, or hard to find. Some users also have difficulty locating them within space. Suggested improvements include using durable materials with raised lines, varied textures, braille, and large print. Maps should be placed in clear, accessible locations and be easy to find and use.
- Participants recommended that all public facing buildings include tactile maps, noting they are also helpful in places like parks and recreation centres. Regular updates and maintenance are important, and staff should be trained to help people use them.

4.2.16 Two-way communication systems

- During engagement, participants shared examples they felt demonstrated good communication support. However, some of the features mentioned may provide one-way information only, rather than true two-way communication. In some cases, this distinction may or may not have been made clear during discussions.
- For this feedback, a two-way communication system is understood as one that allows users to both request help and receive a direct response. Participants emphasized the importance of systems that are easy to find and use, especially in emergencies.

This includes clearly marked help points, tactile wayfinding to communication points, text-based options, and clear verbal or visual responses once a connection is made.

- Feedback highlights the need for clearer understanding and consistent use of true two-way communication systems, as well as better information for users and staff about how these systems work and when help is actively available.

4.2.17 Touchless power door operators

- Some challenges identified with touchless power door operators were that sensors may not detect all skin tones and users may be unsure how to lock or unlock doors. Recommendations for improvement included combining touchless and manual options and providing clear cues for operation.
- Touchless door operators should be large, well-placed, and easy to activate (e.g., hand/foot options, multi-sensory cues, inclusive sensor technology). They must work in all weather, be well-placed, and include accessible controls.

4.2.18 Universal washrooms

- Universal washrooms include barriers such as limited space, poor door access, and lack of grab bars. Best practices, seen at locations like the BMO Centre and the Calgary Zoo, include doorless entry and tactile features.
- Further improvements should include emergency buttons, as well as consistent layouts. Some wanted gender-neutral options with caregiver access.

4.3 Community Conversations

The following outreach and engagement sessions are listed in chronological order.

4.3.1 University of Calgary (March 25, 2025)

Overview

Urban Planning students shared perspectives on accessibility in the built environment through four themed stations. Discussions emphasized the interplay between physical design, intuitive wayfinding, mental and sensory accessibility, education, and policy. Students approached accessibility from both a user and designer lens encouraging opportunities to integrate accessibility thinking earlier and more broadly in planning processes.

Station 1: What elements in the built environment help or hinder accessibility overall?

Students identified many barriers, including poor wayfinding, dark or uneven lighting, unclear design features, too few places to rest, on-street parking without enough space to exit, and winter conditions like snow buildup. They also noted sensory and cognitive challenges such as noise, lighting, scents, fast-moving environments, and misophoniaⁱⁱⁱ. Physical barriers included narrow sidewalks, poor pavement markings, and obstacles like barricades.

Helpful features included intuitive design such as clear crosswalk signals, good lighting, well-integrated accessibility features, accessible alternate routes, shaded resting areas, clear signage, and the use of universal design principles. Students also emphasized the importance of awareness and education in improving accessibility.

Station 2: How can we create standards for people with diverse disabilities and conflicting requirements?

Students recognized that accessibility needs can conflict and require thoughtful negotiation. They emphasized universal design as a cost-effective baseline, integration with broader municipal plans, and avoiding drastic disruptions to established norms. Practical concerns included accessible sidewalks, gym facilities, locked elevators or doors, effective lighting and audio cues.

Students highlighted the importance of hearing directly from affected communities and using personal experiences to inform standards.

They also emphasized education and awareness campaigns, policy implementation, and determining appropriate heights and placements for accessibility buttons and braille.

Station 3: How do the ADS contribute to enhancing the built environment to meet accessibility goals?

Students saw ADS as a tool for promoting literacy, awareness, and inclusive design-thinking. They noted psychological and mental health benefits when environments are welcoming and supportive. ADS can encourage mobility, strengthen community connections, and provide planners and policymakers with a foundation for accessible design.

Students also noted economic and sustainability benefits. Accessible environments can attract investment, support long-term usability, and improve community health. ADS were viewed as a catalyst for dialogue, regulation, and deeper understanding of accessibility needs.

Station 4: What additional measures or changes could further improve accessibility?

Students identified improvements related to governance, policy, infrastructure, and education.

Priorities included:

- Transparent decision-making processes
- Better designs for lecture halls, curbs, ramps, and rest areas
- Reliable sidewalk widths, particularly in winter
- Snow clearing, sand instead of salt, and improved lighting
- Shaded areas, water access, and outdoor shelter near transit
- Improved washroom access and clear accessibility instructions

They advocated for stronger education about accessible design, mandatory post-implementation feedback from users, and incentives or tax breaks to encourage private-sector accessibility improvements. Students also recommended better mapping tools, awareness campaigns, and consideration of federal standards.

All stations summary

Barriers identified

- Poor wayfinding and insufficient navigational support
- Lighting deficiencies and seasonal mobility challenges
- Ambiguous or overly complex design features

- Physical and sensory barriers, including noise, glare, and crowded spaces
- Locked or non-functioning elevators and doors
- Lack of accessible alternate routes
- Inadequate shading, resting areas, and sidewalk widths

What works

- Universal design principles
- Clear, intuitive signage and crosswalk signals
- Proper lighting and integrated accessibility features
- Accessible alternate routes and well-equipped rest areas
- Awareness-building tools within ADS

Suggestions and priorities

- Integrate accessibility standards into municipal planning
- Increase education and accessibility literacy among planners and the public
- Improve lighting, curb design, snow clearing, and transit waiting areas
- Provide better maps, clear instructions, and consistent signage
- Expand engagement with those most affected by accessibility barriers
- Offer incentives for accessibility improvements in private properties

4.3.2 Access Design Subcommittee (April 2, 2025)

Overview

Participants shared their experiences, priorities, and concerns related to key elements of accessible design. Feedback focused on practical improvements, real-world challenges, and the need for flexible design solutions that work across a range of disabilities.

Signage and wayfinding

Participants emphasized the importance of clear, intuitive signage and wayfinding throughout buildings and public spaces.

Key needs

- Simple, easy-to-understand maps, symbols, and signs.
- Readable fonts and sizes that can be seen in crowded or busy environments.

- Consistent placement and design throughout a facility.
- Tactile features and access to tools such as Aira, BlindSquare, or GoodMaps.

They noted that people with vision loss can struggle to locate signage, and that deaf/blind navigation needs are often overlooked. In addition to visual and tactile elements, participants highlighted how daylight, sound, and spatial cues can support intuitive wayfinding. Examples of strong practice include Calgary Transit tactile features and signage at Bankers Hall.

Tactile maps

Participants expressed strong support for tactile maps that use raised textures, lines, and symbols to help people who are blind or have low vision navigate complex environments.

Key needs

- Include braille and clear, distinct textures.
- Be durable and easy to clean.
- Be mounted in visible, predictable locations.
- Include important safety and orientation information.

Concerns

- Difficulty locating tactile maps.
- Lack of awareness of where they are available.
- Need to update maps when spaces change.

Assistive listening systems (ALS)

Participants agreed that ALS significantly improve accessibility for people who are hard of hearing, especially in noisy or crowded spaces.

Key needs

- Installed in all customer service points, including libraries, recreation centres, and police service counters.
- Available in at least two or three meeting rooms within office buildings.
- Supplemented with portable systems when needed.
- Paired with visual emergency notifications.

Concerns

- Lack of staff training.
- Poor placement of equipment.
- High cost of retrofitting older buildings.
- Incorrect installations can result in reduced sound quality.

Two-way communication systems

Participants emphasized that accessible two-way communication systems are essential for safety and independence.

Key areas

- accessible call buttons and texting options
- tactile cues on floors or platforms to guide people to call points
- visual indicators, such as lights or written messages, in addition to audio
- pilot systems in washrooms that check on user safety.

Positive examples

- SAIT's emergency buttons marked by flashing blue lights.
- Improvements were recommended for C-Train emergency help buttons.

Touchless power door operators

Key areas

- Some sensors fail to detect certain skin tones reliably.
- Sensors are sometimes hard to find or placed too far from the door.
- Instructions for locking/unlocking automated washroom doors can be unclear.
- Combined touchless and push button options offer the greatest flexibility-button options offer the greatest flexibility.
- Improved visibility and clear cues would help users operate these doors with confidence.

Mobility device parking (also known as mobility device storage areas)

Participants stressed the importance of dedicated, accessible mobility device parking for scooters, wheelchairs, and similar devices.

Key areas

- Designated parking close to building entrances.
- Room for vehicles to unload safely.
- Storage areas large enough to accommodate scooters without blocking hallways or living spaces.

Positive examples

- Silvera Housing for Seniors with well designed scooter parking near entry points.

4.3.3 Deaf & Hear AB (April 7, 2025)

Overview

Participants from Deaf & Hear Alberta shared experiences and recommendations focused on visual communication, wayfinding, safe paths of travel, two-way communication systems, public/emergency communication, and assistive listening systems (ALS). The feedback highlights the need for consistent visual information, reliable technology, and staff readiness across City facilities and public spaces.

Signage & wayfinding

What works

- Calgary International Airport
- Main road signage and the “H” hospital symbol were clear and recognizable.
- Calgary Central Library as well as having staff to ask for assistance.

Concerns

- The main entrance at Central Library was hard to navigate.
- +15 to Arts Commons signage is confusing.
- Some downtown signs are not sufficiently visual.
- Municipal Building signage is hard to see.
- City recreation facilities could improve signage consistency and visibility.

Participant suggestions

- Use clearer, more visual signage with consistent placement and design.
- Ensure staffed help points (info desks/greeters) in complex buildings.

- Apply consistent standards for fonts, contrast, size, and placement across City facilities.

Paths of travel

What works

- Ground markers and floor cues are useful.
- Designated drop-off and pick-up areas improve accessibility.

Concerns

- Obstructions on sidewalks and paths (e.g., advertising boards) create hazards.
- Poles and street furniture are hard to detect if not clearly marked.
- It is hard to find LRT stations and nearby trails/pathways; detour signage is often unclear.

Participant suggestions

- Keep paths clear of temporary obstructions; set rules for A-frame boards.
- Add high-contrast markings on poles and obstacles to increase visibility.
- Improve wayfinding to transit and provide clear detour signage during construction.
- Ensure affordable parking at key destinations (e.g., hospitals).

Two-way communication systems

What works

- Arts Commons recognized for having a strong system.
- Lab counter mics (e.g., microphones embedded in plexiglass) improved clarity.
- Vancouver Airport uses a sign language interpreter for major announcements.

Concerns

- Systems often lack text-based options.
- People may not know how to access or where to find call/help points.

Participant suggestions

- Provide texting options and/or app-based chat alongside call buttons.
- Explore a City-approved app or partnership with a university to prototype accessible communications tools.
- Use visible cues (lights, signs, floor markers) to direct users to help points.
- Ensure counter mics and acoustic treatments support clear two-way exchanges.

Public & emergency communication systems

What works

- A medical building elevator screen that displayed emergency messages was helpful.
- Low-cost alert methods (e.g., pager-style buzzers) can be effective in some environments.

Concerns

- In emergencies, people need a place to orient and center themselves; many spaces lack this.
- Private rooms (single-occupancy washrooms, change rooms) often lack visual alerts.
- Cost of installations can be a barrier.

Participant suggestions

- Provide visual alerts (lights, on-screen text) everywhere an audible alarm is used, including private washroom and change room.
- Pair audible with visual and text-based alerts (e.g., digital displays, mobile notifications).
- Consider phased or lower-cost solutions where full upgrades are not immediately feasible (e.g., standalone strobes and message boards).
- Design calm/assembly points or clear refuge areas with visible signage for emergencies.

Assistive listening systems (ALS)

What works

- ALS should be available where public services are delivered.
- Help desks and service counters should include ALS.
- Closed captioning should be enabled on all building screens.

Concerns

- ALS are not consistently available in City recreation facilities.
- Staff training is inconsistent. Staff may not know how to operate systems.
- Retrofitting can be expensive and technically challenging.

Participant suggestions

- Install ALS at all customer service points (libraries, recreation centres, CPS counters).
- Provide 2–3 ALS-equipped meeting rooms per building, plus portable units for overflow.

- Include staff training and standard operating procedures.
- Turn on captions by default on public screens; offer live captioning where appropriate.

Key takeaways

- Make visual information consistent and prominent: Clear signage, predictable placement, and visual alerts paired with audio.
- Use multiple communication modes: Audio and visual and text, across public announcements, two-way systems, and emergencies.
- Design for clear, safe movement: Uncluttered paths, marked obstacles, transit wayfinding, and affordable/nearby parking.
- Ensure ALS is present and usable. Install in key locations, train staff, and provide portable options.
- Adopt practical, scalable solutions: Pilot apps/text-in, use cost-effective visual alerts, and phase upgrades where needed.

4.3.4 Calgary SCOPE Society (April 15, 2025)

Overview

Participants from Calgary SCOPE Society shared feedback focused on signage and wayfinding, sensory and quiet spaces, adult change tables, companion seating areas, touchless power door operators, and sharps disposal. Their insights reflect the experiences of people with cognitive disabilities, sensory sensitivities, vision loss, mobility needs, and those unfamiliar with Calgary's systems.

Signage & Wayfinding

What works

- Clear maps showing "You Are Here" were strongly valued, especially downtown, at parks, and within buildings.
- IKEA's floor arrows were cited as an excellent example of intuitive wayfinding.
- Calgary's river pathway signage and Glenmore Reservoir distance markers help with planning routes.

- South Health Campus uses images and colour-coded zones (e.g., Forest, Mountain, River etc.) making navigation easier.
- Visitor/tourism centres with physical maps were seen as helpful.

Concerns

- The Municipal Building east entrance has faded paint, making stairs difficult to see.
- Nearby stairs outside City Hall also blend into the surroundings, creating a tripping hazard.
- The +15 network is confusing. Spaces look alike, inconsistent signage, and it is unclear where signs apply.
- Some downtown signs are not visual enough, and high-mounted signage can be hard to read.
- People unfamiliar with Calgary do not know what a “+15” is.
- Digital maps can be difficult to use for some community members.
- The 311 app does not include an option to report accessibility improvement needs.

Participant suggestions

- Use strong colour contrast, clear icons, and directional arrows.
- Place signs at eye level, not just overhead.
- Add N/S/E/W directions in words, not just symbols.
- Provide more signage, especially in the +15 network, parks, rec centres, and downtown.
- Use plain language, fewer words, and more visual cues.
- Make paper maps available as an alternate format.
- Add an accessibility category in the 311 app for reporting concerns.

Sensory & quiet spaces

Key areas

Participants highlighted the need for quiet spaces across high-traffic public venues including but not limited to the following:

- recreation centres
- libraries
- the Zoo and TELUS Spark
- theatres and event venues
- airports

- Quiet spaces help people rest, de-stress, and avoid sensory overload.
- Semi-private spaces or rooms with one-way mirrors were suggested to support privacy and monitoring.
- Water features and loud auditory elements can be distressing for some people.
- Many venues have no designated quiet areas, even those with long waiting lines.
- Participants questioned how the spaces would be monitored to ensure intended use.

Adult change tables

What works

- Motorized change tables were preferred because they are easier and safer to use.
- Movable or adjustable tables allow flexibility across different locations.

Concerns

- Ceiling lifts can be difficult to use if the angle or placement is incorrect.
- Concerns about maintenance, repair, and misuse.

Suggestions

Participants identified many places where adult change tables would make a meaningful difference:

- the Zoo
- TELUS Spark
- Heritage Park
- museums
- South Glenmore Park
- Arts Commons and other theatres
- festivals and events (e.g. Stampede, Folk Fest, low-income ticket events)

Companion seating & seating areas

What works

- Seating should be available:
 - Airport gates
 - Parks and picnic sites
 - Beside sports fields

- South Health Campus (which has diverse seating options)
- Sporting events and concerts
- Theatres
- Benches with backrests and flat seating surfaces are essential.
- Space beside benches for mobility devices improves safety and inclusion.

Participant suggestions

- Provide family parking and universal access parking at parks.
- Ensure consistent seating options across public spaces.

Touchless power door operators

What works

- Wave sensors are helpful and appreciated when available.

Barriers

- Not everyone understands what “wave” means. Signage and clear instructions needed.
- Lack of cane-detectable guards makes it hard to identify PDO equipment.
- It is not always obvious which direction a door will open.

Participant suggestions

- Add Braille and simple instructional graphics to PDOs.
- Improve visibility of sensors and equipment.
- Include cane-detectable surfaces or guards around PDO installations.
- PDOs should be standard in malls, washrooms, and busy public buildings.

Sharps containers

Concerns

- Sharps containers placed behind toilets are not accessible.
- Toilet stalls are not appropriate locations for disposal.
- People need space to place their bag or belongings when using sharps containers.

Suggested Locations

- beside the sink
- near garbage cans along walking paths
- grocery stores

- train stations
- accessible washrooms with counter space
- fire stations
- AHS managed locations

Key takeaways

- Wayfinding must be visual, intuitive, and consistent, especially in complex networks (e.g. +15).
- Quiet spaces are essential for people with sensory sensitivities and available across major public venues.
- Adult change tables need to be more available, including at festivals and cultural sites.
- PDOs require better visibility, instructions, and tactile cues, including Braille and cane-detectable guards.
- Sharps containers should be accessible, visible, and placed outside stalls, near sinks or counters.

4.3.5 Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) (April 22, 2025)

Overview

Participants with lived experience of low vision or blindness shared perspectives on accessibility in public spaces, including signage and wayfinding, tactile navigation, raised crossings, recreation facilities, and touchless technologies. The discussion noted challenges in navigating both indoor and outdoor environments, identifying safe paths of travel, and accessing public amenities with confidence.

Signage & wayfinding

Participants emphasized the need for consistent, predictable signage that includes high contrast, tactile cues, and non-glare finishes. Many noted difficulties locating signs, reading dimly lit elevator buttons, and interpreting flashing pedestrian signals. Large, open indoor spaces such as malls can

be disorienting without tactile indicators. Shiny floors, grey walls, and black mats reduce visibility and create trip hazards.

Tactile maps

Tactile maps were widely viewed as useful, particularly when paired with large print and varied textures. Participants recommended providing tactile maps in recreation centres, parks, lobbies, museums, and all public-facing facilities. Examples from Singapore and the Tyrell Museum were noted as positive models for combining tactile, digital, and accessible design.

Service dog relief areas

Participants expressed a need for accessible service dog relief areas at all public buildings. Portable or temporary relief areas were described as too small and often poorly maintained. While water access is helpful, cleanliness and permanent placement were prioritized.

Raised crossings & street navigation

Raised crossings were identified as a reliable cue for detecting entry into vehicle zones. Participants rely on elevation changes, detectable slopes, and tactile indicators to navigate streets safely. Audible pedestrian cues are often difficult to hear or follow, contributing to concerns about crossing safety.

Touchless wave sensors

Touchless sensors are appreciated for their ease of use, but participants stressed the need for audible feedback to confirm activation. Sensors should be easy to find through colour contrast or tactile markers, and backup cues should be available when sensors malfunction.

Recreation Facilities

Participants described challenges navigating change rooms, pool decks, and interior corridors within recreation centres. Tactile indicators from entrances to pools, accessible signage, and audio cues for identifying swim lanes would support safer navigation. Staff training was also identified as an important improvement area.

General mobility & transit

Some participants rely on familiarity rather than formal wayfinding due to limited visibility of signs, uneven lighting, or unclear paths. Wait times for Calgary Transit Access were mentioned as a barrier to mobility. Winter conditions further limit outdoor travel due to reduced depth perception and lack of tactile cues at curbs.

4.3.6 Cerebral Palsy Association of Alberta (April 28, 2025)

Overview

Participants shared insights on accessibility challenges and opportunities across signage and wayfinding, mobility device parking, adult change tables, curb ramps, ramps, raised crossings, and power door operators. Feedback reflected a strong emphasis on consistency, space requirements, and ensuring facilities are designed with real-world mobility needs in mind, including both manual and power wheelchair users.

Signage & wayfinding

Concerns

- Significant differences in signage quality across major facilities.
- The Saddledome was noted for having outdated and inconsistent signage, poorly connected elevators, and limited tactile guidance.
- Busy environments like Comic Con were described as overwhelming due to crowd density despite good sign implementation.

Positive examples

- BMO Centre signage was described as clearer and more effective.
- YVR Airport: high-quality tactile flooring, consistent colour and texture cues, and integrated audible and visual navigation tools.
- University of Lethbridge: colour-coded departments, universal symbols, tactile elements with braille, and well-placed pedestals for maps.
- Mount Royal University: having most services in one building makes navigation more manageable.
- Colour-based navigation systems and clear directional arrows on walls

Mobility device parking (also known as mobility device storage)

Participants overwhelmingly agreed that mobility device parking should be available everywhere people go.

Key areas

- Spaces near benches, cafeterias, libraries, and waiting areas.
- Recharge opportunities with reachable outlets, knowing chairs take three hours or more to charge.
- Parking near transit stops and reception areas where devices can be safely monitored.

Concerns

- Side-loading vans being blocked by curbs, making safe unloading [of devices] difficult.
- Narrow spaces that force wheelchair users to “shimmy” between vehicles.
- The need for side access aisles, charging access, and visible placement of mobility device parking.

Companion seating

- Sufficient accessible seating at theatres, arenas, and concerts, including room for attendants and the ability to remain with family groups

Adult change tables

Participants stated clearly that adult change tables are needed everywhere, including arenas, pools, libraries, and park washrooms.

Key areas

- Broad maneuverability space for wheelchairs.
- Room beside toilets for side-by-side transfer.
- Height-adjustable tables and benches.
- Stability of slings and transfer equipment is essential for participants with seizures or higher
- Motorized tables are easier for transferring.
- Ceiling track lifts are valuable but require well-trained staff.
- They want both motorized lifts and ceiling track lifts, as each serves different needs.

Regarding universal shower and dressing rooms, participants noted:

- Change benches and adult change tables should not replace one another. Both are needed.
- Height adjustability for benches would greatly improve usability.
- Mobile lifts can become obstructions if not stored properly.

Curb ramps

Concerns

- Steep slopes make manual wheelchair use extremely difficult.
- Inconsistent curb ramp placement forces users into streets or parking lots.
- Improvements in some neighbourhoods (e.g., Bankview) were appreciated but many ramps remain too steep.
- Some areas (e.g., Castleridge) still lack adequate curb cuts, forcing users into roadways.

Participants stressed the importance of having curb cuts aligned with crosswalks to avoid drifting into traffic, and ensuring slopes are manageable for both manual and power devices.

Ramps

Concerns

- Many ramps are too steep for manual wheelchair users (e.g., Chinook Centre, Calgary Public Library).
- Multi-level facilities should include rest areas, wider surfaces for two-way movement, and covered structures on long exterior ramps.
- The internal ramps at transit stations are preferred over steep interior library ramps.

Participants noted examples of good ramp design at community libraries and highlighted accessible beach ramps at Lake Erie and English Bay as models worth exploring.

Raised crossings

Participants shared mixed feedback:

- Raised crossings help pedestrians but can confuse drivers or cause slips and falls for the general public.

- Users with mobility devices need textural differences and clear colour contrast to detect elevation changes.
- Poor contrast at Heritage Park was cited, with one participant falling from their chair.
- Surfaces that create physical spasms and/or discomfort should be avoided.

Power door operators

Concerns

- Doors sometimes open in unsafe directions relative to traffic flow.
- Touchless sensors do not work well for people with limited dexterity.
- Larger activation surfaces are preferred.

Suggestions

- Avoid placing PDO buttons on ramps.
- Do not deactivate PDOs in cold weather (reported at multiple facilities).
- Vestibules must allow enough room to maneuver for multiple people.

Cerebral Palsy Summary

What works

- Clear colour-coded systems and international signage.
- Tactile and audible wayfinding, especially in airports and universities.
- Mobility device parking near amenities and social spaces.
- Height-adjustable change tables and accessible transfer equipment.
- Accessible beach ramps in other jurisdictions.
- Large, multi-height PDO activation panels.
- BMO Centre has having multi-height activation options (hand or foot-operated).

Challenges

- Outdated, inconsistent, or poorly placed signage.
- Steep ramps and inadequate curb cuts.
- Lack of charging areas and space for mobility devices.
- Broken or unreliable elevators.
- Insufficient accessible seating at events.
- Limited access to adult change tables and appropriate transfer equipment.

- Touchless door sensors and PDO placement that do not meet user needs.
- Poor colour contrast and unsafe transitions at raised crossings.

Participant suggestions

- Update and standardize wayfinding across major City facilities.
- Expand mobility device parking with safe unloading zones and charging options.
- Provide adult change tables with both motorized and ceiling-track lift options.
- Ensure curb ramps meet slope and alignment standards, especially in older neighbourhoods.
- Redesign steep ramps and ensure adequate rest areas and width.
- Improve colour contrast and tactile differentiation at raised crossings.
- Expand reliable PDO systems and avoid cold-weather shutdowns.
- Increase accessible seating options at events, concerts, and theatres.

4.3.7 Spinal Cord Injury Alberta (April 29, 2025)

Overview

Participants with spinal cord injuries provided feedback on accessibility needs related to signage and wayfinding, mobility device parking, adult change tables, curb ramps, ramps, raised crossings, and power door operators. Discussions highlighted differences in user needs based on equipment type and mobility levels, emphasizing the importance of clarity, space, and consistent design.

Signage & wayfinding

Participants expressed mixed preferences between the international accessibility icon and the “active” symbol. Some preferred the active icon for representing independence, while others emphasized the global recognition of the international symbol. Participants noted good wayfinding examples such as South Health Campus (colour-coded floors and walls), malls with audible digital wayfinding, and apps that highlight accessible routes. Clear signage near elevators and multiple sign locations were particularly helpful.

Mobility device parking (also referred to as mobility device storage areas)

Participants emphasized the need for well located mobility device parking near benches, reception desks, or areas with good visibility. Recreation facilities need water chairs, as well as secure storage for personal wheelchairs.

Companion seating

Many rely on staying in their wheelchair, so spaces must accommodate seating for companions and accessible sightlines. Theatres and event venues often lack enough accessible spaces or limit how many seats can be booked with an attendant.

Adult change tables

Participants supported providing adult change tables in recreation centres, especially pools, with both ceiling-track lifts and motorized lift options. They emphasized the need for counter space for medical supplies, given catheter and personal care requirements. International examples showed how motorized stand-assist devices can improve independence. Some Calgary facilities, like Cineplex in Seton, already provide family-accessible washrooms with tables.

Universal shower & dressing rooms

Change benches and adult change tables serve different user needs; both are important. Adjustable height benches were identified as beneficial, and fixed benches offer greater durability. Few facilities currently offer adult change tables, and participants noted that many users require assistance to use these spaces.

Curb ramps

Participants described significant challenges with tactile walking surface indicators (TWSIs), which can cause spasms and discomfort for manual wheelchair users. They recommended limiting TWSIs to ramp edges rather than full surfaces. Blended transitions create risks by directing users into traffic or causing opposing pedestrian conflicts. Participants also reported issues with steep or poorly aligned curb cuts in new subdivisions.

Ramps

Users requested wider ramps to support two-way traffic, larger landings, and rest spaces on long ramps. Covered ramps were suggested for weather protection. Ramp placement must be carefully aligned with accessible parking and building entries, as misaligned ramps create unnecessary travel distances.

Raised crossings

Raised crossings can be beneficial when transferring from road to sidewalk but pose challenges if surface materials cause spasms or if colour contrast is lacking. Participants noted safety issues when landscaping or trees obstruct transfer areas. Some neighbourhoods have removed raised crossings due to concerns from residents with mobility and developmental disabilities.

Power door operators

Participants raised concerns about power door operators being turned off in cold weather, which forces users into less accessible entrances. They emphasized the need for adequate vestibule space, avoiding PDOs on ramps, and ensuring buttons are not placed on the door frame. Larger operators, including long bars or floormounted buttons used in longterm care, are preferred. Sliding doors at accessible washrooms were noted as helpful.

Spinal Cord Injury Summary

What works

- Colour-coded wayfinding systems
- Multiple signage points in malls and hospitals
- Accessible theatre seating options that allow side transfer
- Family-accessible washrooms with change tables
- Long or multi-height PDO activators

Barriers Identified

- TWSIs causing pain or spasms
- Misaligned curb ramps and steep transitions
- Limited accessible seating at events
- Inadequate storage and charging options for mobility devices
- PDO shutdowns in winter and poor placement

- Insufficient visibility of mobility device parking
- Lack of adult change tables in most public facilities

Suggestions

- Improve signage consistency and adopt widely recognized symbols
- Expand mobility device parking with better visibility and companion seating
- Install adult change tables with lift systems in recreation and high-use facilities
- Redesign curb ramps to limit vibration and improve alignment
- Ensure ramps are wide, gradual, and include rest spaces
- Improve surface contrast and unobstructed transfer zones at raised crossings
- Standardize PDO placement and prevent seasonal shutdowns

4.3.8 Disability Action Hall (May 2, 2025)

Overview

Participants from Disability Action Hall shared insights grounded in lived experience across a range of disabilities, including mobility, sensory, cognitive, and vision-related needs. Key ADS areas focused on signage and wayfinding, public transit, universal washrooms, recreation facilities and parks, and mobility device parking. Participants also raised broader accessibility gaps related to respect, safety, and consistency across systems.

Signage & Wayfinding

What works

- CNIB [office] was identified as a strong example, with tactile cues such as cement barriers that help orient people arriving from the LRT.
- Roam Transit (Banff/Canmore) was highlighted as a model system with heated and well-lit stations, matching digital/phone trip information, clear announcements and large signage.
- Improved signage at Village Square Library/Fair Entry was noted positively.

Concerns

- Hospitals (including Foothills):
 - braille was installed in the wrong direction
 - arrows and printed instructions contradicted each other

- Many facilities lack raised print or braille entirely.
- Transit experience:
 - accessible seating not respected
 - overcrowding at the front of buses (walkers, strollers, scooters)
 - safety concerns when drivers brake hard
- +15 network: confusing, visually uniform, hard to navigate; unclear which signs apply to which direction.
- City facilities
 - municipal building signage is hard to see
 - east entrance at Muni has faded paint on stairs
 - Central Library and Brookfield Library have poorly placed door buttons
 - pools do not always support mobility devices
 - Walkers get dirty due to lack of clear pathways.

Suggestions

- Provide raised print + braille, with correct orientation.
- Offer more signage, especially in the +15 and downtown.
- Use plain language, fewer words, more arrows.
- Add N/S/E/W directions in words, not symbols.
- Improve signage placement to eye-level.
- Improve City website accessibility with SeeingAI and Lookout-compatible formatting.
- Provide paper maps and staffed help desks in complex facilities.
- Improve steep or unsafe ramps at Village Square, municipal buildings, and other sites.

Public transportation

What works

- Blue tactile strips (e.g., Brookfield, Bridgeland) help guide blind users to elevators and help buttons.
- Alex Health Centre signage (orange on black) provides good contrast.
- Mexico City's priority gates
- Italy's spacious elevators at the Colosseum and Vatican

Concerns

- Not all stations have tactile pathways, and blind users could not locate help buttons.
- Blue tactile strips may not be visible in snow, low light, or gloomy weather.
- Transit shelters often cannot be used by people with disabilities due to design changes aimed at preventing loitering.
- Elevators at C-Train stations are often poorly marked; signage not colour-blind friendly.
- Doors can close or blow shut even after pressing the accessibility button, causing injuries.
- Long distances to doors (e.g., UCalgary behind MacEwan Hall) create barriers.
- Rundle Station's long ramp is difficult and lacks safe end-of-platform railings.
- Participants reported feeling unsafe on buses due to overcrowding, unpredictable braking, and lack of respect for priority seating.

Suggestions

- Use yellow or high-contrast tactile indicators, not blue.
- Add railings at platform edges to prevent falls.
- Improve accessible entrance signage and colour-blind-safe graphics.
- Create separate seating or sheltered areas specifically for people with disabilities.
- Add visual emergency notifications across transit systems.
- Install better pathway signage to transit and clear detour directions.

Universal washrooms

What works

- BMO Centre is a strong example:
 - accessible door buttons at arm and floor height
 - doors that automatically lock after entry
 - wide entrances and clear wayfinding
- City Hall basement washrooms have open entrances and accessible sinks.
- 360-degree turning space

Concerns

- Difficulty opening doors into washrooms.
- Many facilities lack adult change tables.

- Inconsistent placement of grab bars and signage.
- Drug paraphernalia in the largest stalls raises safety concerns for users.

Suggestions

- Standardize washroom layout across City facilities.
- Add hanger rails/grab bars on both sides of toilets.
- Include adult change tables and space for multiple people in universal washrooms
- Explore secure access options (e.g., app-based entry, coded access) to improve safety without restricting use.
- Add voice-activated or hands-free help buttons.
- emergency buttons
- gender neutral washrooms for caregiver flexibility-neutral washrooms for caregiver flexibility

Recreation facilities & parks

What works

- Tactile cues at pool edges are essential for people with vision loss.
- The Wolf Trails Program provides accessible, inclusive recreation for Indigenous and low-income women.
- The Riley Park performance space is accessible and flat.
- Fish Creek Park's "Steam Changes Trail" has accessible trail features.

Concerns

- Village Square hot tub and wave pool areas can be hazardous due to lack of tactile edging.
- A lip at the top-floor washroom creates a tripping hazard.
- Rotary Park lacks connecting sidewalks.
- Caregivers struggle to find accessible residential parking close to homes.
- VRI Pool closure was a loss. Participants valued its warm water, lifts, and water chairs.

Suggestions

- Add tactile edging around pools.
- Make trails wheelchair accessible and close to transit stops.
- Provide more seating near entrances and parking lots for Access Calgary users.
- Ensure adaptive fitness equipment (e.g., bikes with wider seats) is available.

- Provide adult fitness parks with accessible equipment and ASL translation.
- Consider shared caregiver parking passes linked to agencies.

Mobility device parking (also known as mobility device storage areas)

What works

- YMCA Saddleridge offers accessible change rooms where mobility devices can be locked safely inside.

Concerns

- Lack of scooter/ wheelchair charging stations creates risk of people becoming stranded.
- Access Calgary easily locates buildings, but not park entrances, making pickups difficult.
- Safety concerns from e-scooters and e-bikes circulating near people with disabilities.
- People often rely on nearby cafés as improvised meeting points.

Suggestions

- Provide locking mobility device parking near washrooms and Access Calgary pickup areas.
- Add charging stations with clear emergency contact info.
- Install security features (lighting, cameras, emergency buttons).
- Use international accessibility symbols for clarity.
- Provide washroom access cards or standardized entry systems.

Disability Action Hall Summary

- Signage and wayfinding must be consistent, tactile, plain-language, and placed at eye level.
- Transit requires better tactile guidance, visual alerts, safe doors, colour-blind-friendly signage, and respectful user environments.
- Universal washrooms must provide space, caregiver access, adult change tables, and consistent layouts.
- Recreation spaces should include tactile cues, accessible trails, more seating, and adaptive fitness equipment.
- Mobility device parking needs charging, security, proximity to washrooms, and predictable Access Calgary pickup points.



Access Design Standards Update

WWHR Round 2A | 2025

5.0 What we did

After Round 2A, the project team reviewed all feedback from the engagement sessions. Feedback from CNIB, Deaf & Hear Alberta, Spinal Cord Injury Alberta, the Cerebral Palsy Association, Disability Action Hall, and Calgary SCOPE Society was organized by user group to understand the specific needs and priorities of each community.

This feedback was then used to update the draft Access Design Standards (ADS) so the document reflects real accessibility needs and lived experience. The updated draft will be shared in Round 2B with industry and technical partners to confirm the standards are practical, technically sound, and can be applied across different types of buildings and public spaces.

Together, the insights from Round 2A and the technical review in Round 2B will help create standards that are realistic to implement and responsive to the diverse accessibility needs of Calgarians.

The updated Access Design Standards are scheduled to go to Council for approval in Q2 2026.

5.1 What we did (detailed)

Accessibility Note: Two-column table, short sentences, no merged cells. Each “What We Did” maps directly to a standard or guidance change (Sorted by [Section 4.2 What We Heard Key Areas](#))

Adult change tables

What we heard	What we did
Needed in major public spaces/events; want manual and powered lift options (incl. ceiling lifts), caregiver space, maneuverability;	Clarified where adult change tables should be provided, and set requirements for clearances, caregiver access, height adjustability, a shelf, waste receptacle, and clear signage with instructions for use. We also introduced options for powered and manual lifts and emphasized the

consistent availability and maintenance.

importance of consistent availability across locations to support dignity and usability.

Assistive listening systems (ALS)

What we heard	What we did
Staff lack training; equipment hidden or poorly maintained; retrofits are costly; high-use sites need Bluetooth-capable systems.	Set requirements for where assistive listening systems should be provided, outlined the types of systems available, identified sources for further guidance, and specified the required symbols of access to support consistent, accessible signage.

Curb ramps & ramps

What we heard	What we did
Many are too steep/missing; need width, rest areas, proper landings, smooth surfaces, contrast; avoid blended transitions/TWSIs that cause discomfort.	Enhanced and clarified requirements for curb ramps, other exterior ramps, and safe crossings.

Emergency communication

What we heard	What we did
Enclosed spaces (washrooms/elevators) need visual and audio alerts; closed captioning and tactile/visual notifications in public areas.	Set requirements for where visual and audible signal devices should be provided, and for their visibility and audibility.

Mobility device parking (also known as mobility device storage areas)

What we heard	What we did
Need indoor/nearby parking and charging; concerns about security; poor curb access	Set requirements for the locations of mobility device storage areas and the associated technical requirements for these areas.

and broken elevators; transit compatibility varies.

Parks & recreation facilities

What we heard	What we did
Need tactile paths/signage, audio cues, accessible change rooms; praise for tactile pool edges, accessible hot tubs, inclusive programs; more seating near parking, accessible trails, adaptive equipment.	Enhanced requirements and graphics, clarified intent, for accessible paths of travel and the access and use of amenities, including change rooms, pool areas, and seating

Paths of travel

What we heard	What we did
Ground markers help; obstacles (poles/boards) impede movement; detour signage and LRT wayfinding unclear.	Enhanced requirements for accessible paths of travel and for access to and use of amenities. Signage standards were also updated, including new requirements for directional signage, and a new appendix on wayfinding was added with best practice guidance.

Public transportation

What we heard	What we did
Inadequate tactile strips; inaccessible help buttons; poor shelters; unsafe platform edges; long distances; malfunctioning doors; limited turning space; drop-offs not aligned to crossings.	Expanded standards and guidance covering areas such as tactile walking surface indicators, help buttons, transit infrastructure, clearances and more. Recommended external resources have also been provided.

Raised crossings

What we heard	What we did
Highly effective with tactile lines, contrasting colours, and detectable slopes; need better visibility and driver awareness.	Strengthened requirements, guidance, and graphics for raised crossings, addressing colour contrast, slopes, and tactile cues.

Seating Areas

What we heard	What we did
More seating needed (airports, parks, sports fields); require companion seating and space for mobility devices.	Enhanced accessible seating requirements across all seating areas and added new requirements for mobility device storage.

Sensory & quiet spaces

What we heard	What we did
Needed in public venues; should be signed, semi-private, and monitored.	Added a new appendix outlining a sensory friendly design approach, with best practice guidance.

Service dog relief areas

What we heard	What we did
Needed at all public buildings; cleanliness and space more important than water features; portable options often insufficient.	Expanded and clarified requirements for service dog relief areas.

Sharps containers

What we heard	What we did
Place beside sinks (not behind toilets); clear signage; needed in transit stations and public washrooms.	Enhanced and clarified the requirements for sharps containers.

Signage & wayfinding

What we heard	What we did
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Hard to find, inconsistent, outdated; apps not fully accessible; need tactile/audio cues, plain language, high visibility; examples of both good and poor practice noted.

Updated signage requirements to improve consistency of accessibility features are consistent and introduce new directional signage requirements. A new appendix on wayfinding has been added, providing best practice guidance.

Tactile maps

What we heard

Often damaged/outdated or hard to find; need durable materials, raised lines, textures, braille/large print; staff should assist.

What we did

Added new standards for tactile maps and identified a recommended resource for best practice guidance.

Two-way communication systems

What we heard

Need true two-way systems (request and receive help); easy to find/use; tactile routes; text options; clear feedback when connected.

What we did

Added requirements for two-way communication systems, including hands-free operation, accessible mounting heights, audible and visual communication features, volume control, and compliant operable controls.

Touchless power door operators

What we heard

Sensors can fail on different skin tones; lock/unlock unclear; need touchless + manual; must work in all weather; large, well-placed controls.

What we did

Enhanced requirements for power operated door controls, including code compliance, increased clear floor space, and the use of vertical activation bars. Additional guidance has also been provided for wave-to-open sensors.

Universal Washrooms

What we heard	What we did
Barriers: limited space, door access, missing grab bars; best practices: doorless entry, tactile features; need emergency buttons; caregiver access; some want gender-neutral.	Introduced new and revised requirements for universal washrooms, including lighting controls, baby change tables, shelves, coat hooks, and emergency call systems.

6.0 Updated timeline (next steps)

Round 1: General outreach and engagement

Completed

Conducted broad outreach and engagement activities with Calgary's disability community to identify early priorities, barriers, and opportunities.

Round 2A: Targeted engagement sessions

Completed

Community members and disability-serving organizations provided detailed feedback through focused outreach and engagement sessions.

Feedback review and analysis

Completed

The project team organized participant feedback by user group to understand specific accessibility needs and priorities.

Draft standards updated

Completed

The Access Design Standards were revised based on lived experience and subject-matter expertise to ensure updates reflected real accessibility needs and challenges.



Access Design Standards Update

WWHR Round 2A | 2025

Round 2B: Industry and technical review

Upcoming (Q4 2025)

Architects, engineers, designers, builders, and the Access Design Sub-committee will review the updated draft to confirm technical feasibility and identify any implementation challenges.

Final revisions

Upcoming (Q1 2026)

The project team will integrate industry and technical feedback and prepare the final version of the standards.

Round 3: Closing the loop

Planned for Q1-2 2026)

Report back to participants.

Council review and approval

Planned for Q2 2026

The updated Access Design Standards will be presented to Council for approval.

Appendix A: Plain Language Summary of Key Terms

Adult change tables: Strong, safe tables that help support adults who need help with changing or personal care.

Assistive Listening Systems (ALS): Systems that make speech clearer and reduce background noise for people who use hearing aids. Examples include FM systems, infrared systems, and loop systems.

Curb ramp: Sloped areas that connect the sidewalk to the street.

Mobility service parking (storage): Spaces made for parking wheelchairs, scooters, and other mobility devices.

Power Door Operators: Automatic doors that open and close for you.

Raised Crossing: Pedestrian crossings built at or near sidewalk height so people crossing are more visible and have the design elements needed to safely navigate crossings.

Ramps: Inclined surfaces that help people move between levels without using stairs.

Service dog relief areas: Designated places where service dogs can go to the bathroom

Signage and Wayfinding: Signs, maps, and other design elements that help people find their way around buildings and outdoor spaces.

Tactile Maps: Maps with raised lines and textures that help people who are blind or have low vision understand and navigate a space.

Tactile Walking Surface Indicators (TWSIs): Raised dots or bars on the ground that help people who are blind or have low vision detect hazards or find their way.

Touchless Door Operators: Doors that open automatically when you wave your hand or approach them. No touching needed.

Appendix B: Round 2A Methodology

Round 2A used a dialogue-based approach focused on understanding people's perspectives, values, and reasoning. The goal was to learn through conversation, not to measure opinion or gather statistically representative data.

Engagement took place through facilitated discussions using open-ended questions. Participants could talk about what mattered most to them. Notes were taken during or shortly after each session to document key points. No audio recordings or verbatim transcripts were created.

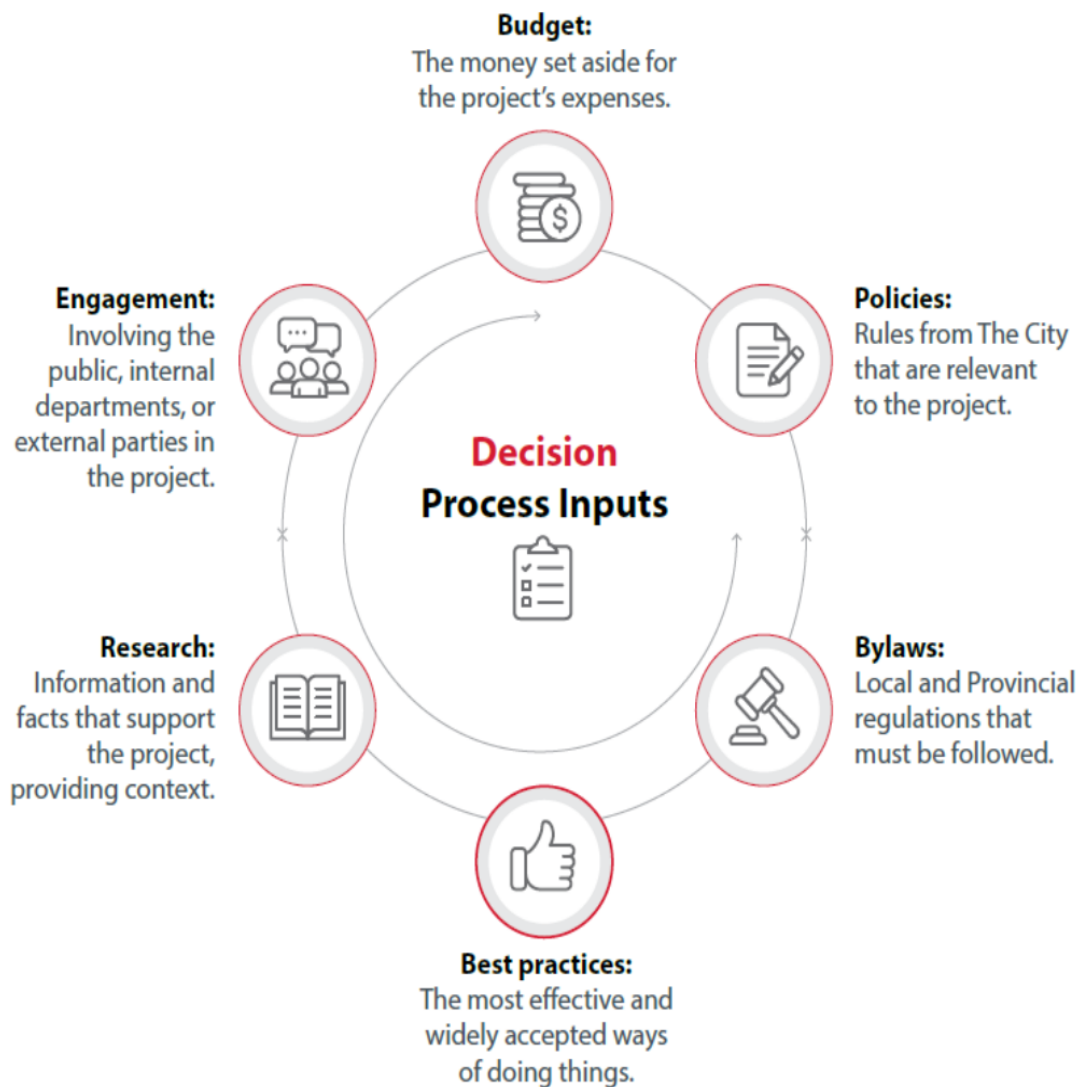
The information collected should be seen as interpretive summaries based on professional judgment and not exact quotes. Because the notes were not verbatim, the results cannot be used for statistical analysis or formal qualitative coding.

Analysis looked for themes across all sessions, such as common ideas, concerns, alignments, and tensions. The purpose was to support sense-making and generate insight, not to count responses. Rigour was supported through consistent facilitation, reflective note-taking, awareness of facilitator influence, and clear communication about the method's limitations.

These findings are intended to provide context and support informed decision-making. They should not be used to measure the level of support or opposition, claim representativeness, or replace statistically reliable research.

Appendix C: Decision Process Inputs

Public input is balanced with factors like budgets, regulations, and best practices. The diagram below illustrates the inputs that go into the decision process.



End notes

i i Views are the number of times a Visitor views any page on a Site. Visits are the number of end-user sessions associated with a single Visitor. Visitors: the number of unique public or end-users to a Site. A Visitor is only counted once, even if they visit a Site several times in one day.

ii ii [Makoyoh'Sokoi - The Wolf Trail Wellness Program](#)

iii **Misophonia** is a condition where certain everyday sounds—like chewing, breathing, or tapping—trigger strong negative feelings such as anger, irritation, or disgust