

**ACCESS ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**TO:**            *MAYOR AND COUNCILLORS*

**SUBJECT: UPDATE ON ACCESSIBILITY IN PARKS, RECREATION AND  
CULTURE FACILITIES**

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**THAT** the report titled “Update on Accessibility in Parks, Recreation and Culture Facilities” dated February 5, 2025, of the Access Advisory Committee meeting, be received for information.

**REPORT**

The Access Advisory Committee, at its meeting held on February 5, 2025, received and adopted the attached report providing information on accessibility in Parks, Recreation and Culture (PRC) facilities.

On behalf of the Access Advisory  
Committee,

Councillor M. Santiago  
Chair

Councillor R. T. Lee  
Vice Chair

**TO:** ACCESS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (AAC)  
**FROM:** GENERAL MANAGER PARKS, RECREATION AND CULTURE  
**SUBJECT:** **UPDATE ON ACCESSIBILITY IN PRC FACILITIES**  
**PURPOSE:** To provide information on accessibility in PRC facilities.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

**THAT** the report titled Update on Accessibility in Parks, Recreation and Culture Facilities dated February 5, 2025, be received for information.

## **1.0 POLICY SECTION**

This Report aligns with the Benefits Based Approach (2024).

## **2.0 BACKGROUND**

At the Access Advisory Committee meeting on October 24, 2024, the Committee forwarded a motion to Council to direct staff to review the adaptive fitness equipment available in the City's recreation centres. Council approved the motion on December 2, 2024. This report provides an update on the adaptive fitness equipment and overall accessibility within PRC facilities.

After the committee meeting in October, staff reached out to Access Advisory Committee Member, R. Bitz, to further understand concerns and discuss ideas for how to improve services, specifically at the City's Recreation and Community Centres.

## **3.0 GENERAL INFORMATION**

Community centres are vibrant, welcoming hubs with the goal of fostering a sense of belonging for everyone. Going beyond universal facility design to how we plan and provide programming and deliver day-to-day welcoming interactions, community centres provide diverse programs and activities that cater to a wide range of abilities and interests. All individuals should be able to engage in ways that are personally meaningful. By breaking down barriers and creating safe, inclusive spaces, our community centres encourage connection, collaboration, and growth, strengthening unity within the community.

Within these community centres, PRC strives to create physical activity spaces that are inclusive and accessible to all members of the community. While incorporating

equipment tailored to diverse needs is an essential aspect of this commitment, PRC recognizes the importance of a holistic approach to accessibility. This means going beyond specialized equipment to ensure that all individuals – regardless of age, ability, or background – have equitable access to our programs, services, and facilities.

### **Inclusive Programs and Services**

PRC is dedicated to addressing the diverse needs of all community members. We offer adaptive programs and one-on-one support resources. Additionally, there are numerous opportunities to modify activities and services to ensure that everyone can participate.

Providing adaptive equipment in facilities is a small component of accessibility. Every person, able bodied or not, has a variety of needs that not one single piece of equipment can provide. Generally, the City purchases equipment that can be used in multiple ways by people of all abilities. Most importantly is that a person with a disability is getting the support they need to meet their recreation goals.

After meeting with Committee Member Bitz, staff are working to update the “Accessibility Features” button on each facility’s website to be more welcoming, with a list of physical features and also encouraging people with disabilities to contact staff for further information and resources.

### **Staff Education and Training**

Training all staff in recreation facilities on accessibility and inclusion is crucial to fostering welcoming, respectful and supportive environments. Staff are working with Committee Member Bitz and developing a training session to pilot at Edmonds Community Centre in 2025. Prioritizing training for front desk and fitness centre staff and supervisors will be a key focus in 2025. Staff recognize that a welcoming experience at City facilities begins before a person even enters the doors and we are committed to the highest level of customer service in having all community members feel they belong.

### **Specialized Equipment**

Adaptive, specialized fitness centre equipment is becoming increasingly difficult to source as many pieces have been discontinued. While these adaptive machines are highly specialized, they do not meet the needs of most users. Currently our facilities feature accessible equipment such as Arm Cranks, SkiErg, Hand Cycles, and wheelchair accessible recumbent bike, chest press, rope pulls and rowers. Additionally, accessories like hand straps, chest straps, lifting hooks are available to assist users in adapting standard equipment to their needs. For example, a standard adjustable height pulley machine, which each of our fitness centre has, is among the most versatile pieces, offering diverse options for many users. The key to ensuring accessibility in fitness centres lies in staff connecting with patrons to understand their individual needs. Staff can provide personalized options and support, such as assisting patrons with visual disabilities by orienting them to new equipment and informing them of changes

that may impact pathways. By fostering a welcoming environment, staff encourage patrons to feel comfortable seeking assistance.

The City of Burnaby's Accessibility Plan will serve as a guiding framework to identify, remove and prevent barriers to individuals interacting with the City. As the Committee is aware, work on the plan will continue into 2025. The focus areas include the built environment, information and communication, programs and services, procurement and customer service. Goals and action items arising from the focus areas will prioritize recreation centres that are welcoming and accessible to all. In addition, the Active Living Alliance for Canadians with a Disability is updating its resource "Municipal Guide to Promising and Best Practices for Disability Inclusion in Recreation and Physical Activity" and staff will be referring to this guide and using it to improve our services.

Additionally, operational ideas from the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association's "Framework for Recreation in Canada" are being incorporated. This includes evaluating how welcoming a facility is and planning changes to the physical and social environment to foster a sense of belonging. For example, posting video tours of each facility on the website can help patrons understand what to expect and how to navigate the space. The framework also highlights the importance of strategic planning for inclusion and access, emphasizing the goal of increasing a sense of belonging for all participants.

#### **4.0 COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

PRC will collaborate with the Communications Department to share fitness centre updates and information on the website. The recently introduced online Accessibility Feedback form offers an additional avenue for community members to share their insights and suggestions. Fitness centre staff will continue engaging with patrons to foster an inclusive and welcoming environment, ensuring everyone feels encouraged to participate.

#### **5.0 FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

There are no financial considerations associated with this report. Funding for fitness equipment and staff training is provided through the existing PRC budget.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Morrison-Clark, General Manager Parks, Recreation and Culture

#### **REPORT CONTRIBUTORS**

This report was prepared by Teri Keller, Manager Recreation Services, and reviewed by Judy Hamanishi, Director Recreation.