



BEYOND BARRIER-FREE



Salt Spring Island Accessibility Review – Salt Spring Island Multi Space (SIMS) September 22, 2025

Accessibility Summary

This summary report provides accessibility-related insights of the Salt Spring Island Multi Space (SIMS) offering current strengths and opportunities to further include all members of the community. This review has been prepared by Marco and Karin Pasqua of Meaningful Access Consulting (MAC) following a walkthrough completed September 22, 2025.

This report takes into account the perspectives of people with mobility, cognitive, auditory, learning, sensory and visual disabilities and is based on criteria developed by the Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification program and best practices offered by the CSA B651-23 guidelines.

Assessment Scope

The scope of this report covers public and staff-only areas of the building, including entrances, offices, meeting rooms, washrooms, routes of access, pathways, parking facilities, change rooms, the gymnasium, multi-sensory spaces and emergency systems.

Disclaimer

It is important to note that these are recommendations only, and not intended to replace any building codes, laws, or regulations. If in doubt, please consult a building code or legal professional.

MAC is not responsible for changes to the building or venue that happens as a result of this report. The owner, tenant, manager, or operator of the building or venue should use discretion when taking any action arising from this report.

OVERVIEW

The Salt Spring Island Multi Space (SIMS) has emerged as a vibrant example of how an existing community asset can be thoughtfully reimagined to serve the evolving needs of island residents. Once the Salt Spring Island Middle School, the facility has undergone a dynamic transformation into a multi-use hub that brings together creativity, social connection, and resilience under one roof. The familiar acronym “SIMS” remains, now standing as a symbol of continuity and renewal for a space that has become the heart of local collaboration and activity.

Today, the halls that once echoed with the sounds of classrooms now host an array of community-driven programs representing the full spectrum of island life; from music, dance, and visual arts to recreation, literacy, and social services. The building provides a home for groups such as Salt Spring Literacy, Transition Salt Spring, and the Capital Regional District (CRD) Emergency Program. Each contributes to a shared vision of a facility that is not only active but adaptive, one that fosters creativity, learning, and well-being for all who enter.

From an accessibility standpoint, SIMS demonstrates a meaningful commitment to inclusivity by providing accessible routes of travel, adaptable multi-purpose spaces, and areas that encourage rest, reflection, and connection. The building’s repurposing represents more than just adaptive reuse; it embodies the principles of universal design and the values of community resilience.

The site already features ramps, an accessible washroom, ample lighting and seating as well as connection to the outdoors via large windows. Considerations for the dance room have already been made as have accommodating access to most spaces via lifts.

As with any evolving public facility, there remain opportunities to enhance the experience further especially through improvements to signage, upgrades to lighting, and thoughtful considerations to sensory inclusion. This report highlights both the successes already achieved and the pathways for continued growth, ensuring that SIMS remains a model of accessibility and meaningful access for Salt Spring Island’s residents and visitors alike.

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Parking & Approach

Parking

The parking lot is accessed by a shared roadway and is somewhat shared between the SIMS building and the adjacent Salt Spring Island Elementary School. The signage leading to the site is relatively well considered and the address of the building leads you directly to the parking lot when using the GPS.

- ✔ The parking surfaces are generally level, firm, non-slip and without significant slope.
- ✔ There is one designated accessible stall that is well-marked using both vertical pole signage as well as pavement decals allowing for the stall to be easily visible when a car is parked within the stall and at a distance.

Entrance & Wayfinding

- ✔ There is one sign directing people to the SIMS building, located at the fork in the road between the SIMS building and the Learning center.
- ✔ There is signage on the exterior of the building that provides the name of the building.
- ✔ The main entry is covered with a canopy offering weather protection.
- ✔ The main entrance doors have high visual contrast ensuring that they're easily seen at a distance and easy to identify.
- ✔ The glazing at the entrance doors allows for significant light to enter the facility and manage the lighting difference between the exterior and interior spaces.
- ✔ The main door is operable with an automatic door operator, located at the top of the ramp and out of the swing path of the door.
 - ✔ The use of the wood adds additional contrast to the door operator button making it easy to find.
 - ✔ The automatic door is indicated with the use of a decal.



Parking & Approach

Ramps

- ✔ There are two main ramps that facilitate access to the building with one being the primary access point and one having been a previous entrance which is now decommissioned.
- ✔ There's a ramp at the rear of the facility attached to an emergency exit. This door is or was operable with an automatic door operator and features round, graspable handrails on both sides of the ramp.
 - ✔ This ramp is very long and does feature regular landing areas allowing for people to rest.

Secondary Entrance (Decommissioned)

- ✔ The ramp features round, bilateral and graspable handrails.
- ✔ The area in front of the secondary ramp is painted with hatch-marks preventing cars from parking in the space.
 - ✔ This ramp provides access to the exterior playground area.

Primary Access Ramp

- ✔ The ramp to access the main entrance of the building is part ramp and part slope, integrated into a pathway that meanders through the trees and leads to a dedicated ramp.
- ✔ Once you access the steeper portion of the ramp, there is a round and graspable handrail that extends to the landing.
- ✔ There is a short additional ramp to compensate for the two steps up to the main entrance doors which is a good slope and features a cane detectable handrail.

Stairs

- ✔ The main stairs to access the main entrance of the facility are on the primary path of travel and feature round and graspable handrails on both sides of the stairs.



Barriers & Recommendations: Parking & Approach

Transit & Pedestrian Access

- Transit on Salt Spring Island is limited which limits people's mobility and accessibility to access spaces like the SIMS building and its respective programs. Consequently, individuals are reliant on walking, cycling, e-bikes, mobility scooters and vehicular transportation to access the space.

Recommendation:

- It's therefore recommended to review the parking space provided at this site and ensure that it meets the needs of the program users including offering sufficient space for vehicles with accessibility requirements.

Entrance & Wayfinding

Recommendations:

- More robust signage on the exterior of the building is recommended as the name of the building cannot be seen until you are already quite close to the entrance. Consider making the signage larger with greater visibility at a distance.



Pathways

Recommendations:

- Adding lighting is highly recommended, along the pathways leading to the main entrance to elevate safety and visibility at night.



Barriers & Recommendations: Parking & Approach

Accessible Parking Stalls

- The current accessible stall is located parallel and against rock face which is awkward and difficult to use. Its location prevents it from being truly accessible as the environment creates a narrowed space, especially for people needing transfer space for a mobility device (walker, wheelchair or cane).
- Additionally, the location of the ramp leads people to believe that the main entrance is on the right-hand side of the building with the visible ramp rather than the left-hand side.

Recommendations:

- It's highly recommended to relocate the accessible stall to a flatter, wider location closer to the ramp.
- When updating the paint, or signage, it is recommended to use the dynamic accessibility symbol and add a blue square to increase contrast and visibility at a distance.
- Consider offering additional temporary accessible parking for key programs or events



Did you know?



Using the dynamic accessibility symbol instead of the traditional symbol helps break down attitudinal barriers and helps redefine how we look at people with disabilities.

Best Practices:

- Accessible parking stalls should be at least **2600 mm** wide with an adjacent access aisle of **2000 mm** wide for stalls perpendicular to the roadway.
- For stalls parallel to the roadway, a rear access aisle of at least **2000 mm** long is recommended and an unobstructed area for side embarkation, on a pedestrian right-of-way of **2000 mm by 5500 mm**.



Barriers & Recommendations: Parking & Approach

Ramps

Secondary Entrance (Decommissioned)

- The ramp leading to the decommissioned entrance is the most obvious ramp for visitors, especially those unfamiliar with the site. It is narrow and has significant cross slope, making the ascent difficult for wheelchair users. The top of ramp leads to a set of stairs which is not easily visible from the base of the ramp.
 - This causes visitors to take this ramp thinking it is the main entrance and then requiring them to double-back once they see the sign posted on the door indicating the location of the main entrance.



Primary Access Ramp

- The main entrance ramp is not easy to see at a distance, nor does it feel like it is the primary access to the site.
- The primary ramp has some tree-root damage making the surface uneven, especially at areas where someone may need to pull to the site to take a moment to rest.

Best Practices:

- Exterior ramps should be at least **1200 mm** wide with a running slope of between **8.33%** and **5%** (aiming to be closer to 5% than 8% for independent access) with level landings every 9000 mm.
- Landing should be at least **1700 mm** long and as wide as the ramp.
- Bilateral handrails are recommended for all ramps with a slope of 5% or greater.



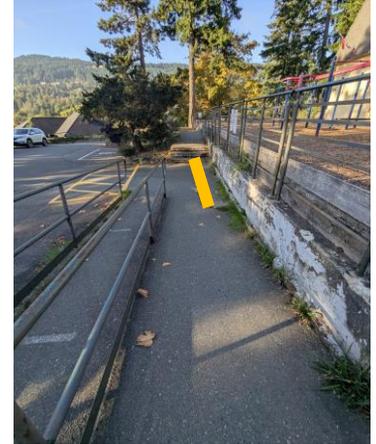
Barriers & Recommendations: Parking & Approach

Recommendations:

- It's highly recommended to add directional signage to the parking lot highlighting the main entrance of the building, preventing people from navigating unnecessarily towards the decommissioned entrance. Signage at the base of the ramps is highly recommended.

Secondary Entrance (Decommissioned)

- Add some contrast to the nosing of the steps and transition at the bottom of the ramp to better highlight the tripping hazards.
- Consider adding a small ramp to the area to access the playground as there is currently a step up to the playground. Adding a small ramp here would create greater access for people using mobility devices including both children and caregivers as well as parents pushing strollers.
 - This would also make the ramp up to this area more purposeful and useful.



Primary Access Ramp

- Consider extending the handrails to offer more balance support further down the ramp, particularly around the corner by the tree. This will help people navigate the tree root damage as well as can assist mobility device users in pulling themselves up the ramp.
- When completing a larger renovation of the site, creating landings is highly recommended to ensure people have the ability to rest when navigating up the ramp.
- Increase the level of edge protection, ensuring cane detectability and keeping mobility device users on the path. This could be done with environmentally-appropriate edging such as stones or bricks.
- The ramp that connects the landing to the entrance landing would greatly benefit from an additional handrail mounted along the wall and, when completing a more significant renovation, replacing the current handrail with one that is round.
- Consider relocating the bike rack at this currently placed at the top of the intersection between the stairs and the ramp to prevent accidental barriers in the path of travel.



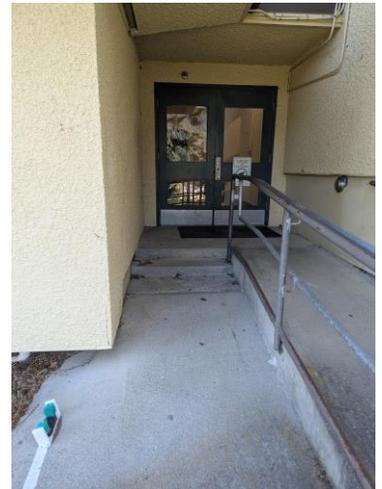
Barriers & Recommendations: Parking & Approach

Emergency Exit Ramp

- The top landing of the emergency exit ramp at the rear of the facility has a very strange layout with two steps on one side which currently do not lead to any designated path of travel and the entrance to the ramp. This could be quite confusing for people especially those unfamiliar with the site or during an emergency as it is not clear that the steps do not leave anywhere.
- With the steps not having any contrast or handrail dedicated to them they could be invisible particularly when people are moving quickly during emergency.

Recommendations:

- Consider blocking these steps off with a gate or handrail in similar design to the current one to prevent people from using the steps.





Barriers & Recommendations: Parking & Approach

Stairs and Steps

The current stairs are a 'wash of grey' particularly in the evening, when lighting levels are low or during high sun where there is an inconsistent appearance to the ground surface due to shadows.

The stairs at the back of the building have some deterioration of the tread which could cause tripping hazards.

Recommendations:

- The stairs leading to the entrances would benefit greatly from contrast on the nosing, both tread and rise.
 - Without a contrasting strip on the nosing, the step edge can visually disappear when ascending, especially in glare or low-light conditions. It is recommended to install durable, slip-resistant, high-contrast nosing on both the tread and riser, spanning the full width of each step. This does not need to be high-visibility yellow; a neutral or branded colour is appropriate, as long as it provides strong visual contrast.
- Repair any inconsistencies in the concrete ensuring that no gaps remain and that the tread is even and stable.





Barriers & Recommendations: Parking & Approach

Stairs and Steps - Continued

Recommendations:

- The stairs leading to the main entrance would greatly benefit greatly from contrast on the nosing, both tread and rise.
 - Without a contrasting strip on the nosing, the step edge can visually disappear when ascending, especially in glare or low-light conditions. It is recommended to install durable, slip-resistant, high-contrast nosing on both the tread and riser, spanning the full width of each step. This does not need to be high-visibility yellow; a neutral or branded colour is appropriate, as long as it provides strong visual contrast.
- It is highly recommended to install attention tactile walking surface indicators (TWSI), preferably as truncated domes with contrast on the top landing for ALL stairs. This feature not only increases the contrast and visibility of the stairs but also support individuals who are blind in locating the stairs and identifying the area as having a change in grade.
 - The TWSIs do not need to be “high vis yellow” necessarily, just a colour that offers contrast to the surrounding floor. Yellow is frequently used for its visibility at night as well as it being the last colour that is lost when someone is losing their sight.



Photo demonstrates the correct placement of TWSIs at the tops of stairs.



Example of dark stud-style TWSIs that provide both contrast and tactile information.

Truncated domes, the raised circular patterns found at the edge of ramps and crossings enhance safety by providing tactile, visual, and sometimes auditory cues that signal a change in environment. The contrast in colour and texture helps people with low vision detect transitions, while the texture underfoot or under a mobility aid alerts users to potential hazards such as streets or drop-offs.



Lobby

- ✓ The lobby itself is a generous and bright space that is welcoming and well-lit, thanks to large windows, artificial lighting.
 - ✓ The lobby lighting is consistent and even managing the difference between the indoors and outdoors very well.
- ✓ There are washrooms easily visible from the entrance doors and directly off of the main lobby.
 - ✓ An accessible washroom is found immediately off of the lobby.
- ✓ A variety of seating styles and heights is provided in the lobby with both backrests and armrests, offering supported places to pause at convenient intervals and making sit-to-stand safer and more comfortable for people who benefit from extra leverage.
- ✓ There are tables that provide knee clearance for someone using a mobility device.
- ✓ The large mural adjacent to the seating area allows for placemaking and creating an easy way to identify where you are.
- ✓ The flooring can also act as a wayfinding cue as there is a distinct difference between the carpeted flooring in the gathering area and the typical linoleum of the corridor.



Did you know?

Distinctive visual elements like unique lighting fixtures, art pieces, windows, or water features act as memorable landmarks that help people associate different areas of a building or site. These artistic wayfinding markers make it easier to construct a mental map of the space and stay oriented.



Circulation

Navigation

- ✓ Circulating around the facility is generally quite logical and straightforward with the primary amenities being directly off of a circular corridor.
- ✓ The majority of amenities are accessible by someone with a disability including a stair lift being provided to descend the stairs to the dance room.

Building Controls

- ✓ Building controls (heat, lighting, AV, door operators, etc.) are generally mounted at accessible heights.
- ✓ Controls are generally easy to use without the need for fine dexterity.
- ✓ Door handles are generally lever-style which are easier for people to use as they don't require a turning of the wrist and more intuitive during emergencies.

Lighting and Contrast

- ✓ There is ample lighting throughout the facility including overhead lighting and natural lighting thanks to the ample frequency of windows.
 - ✓ The windows allow access to the exterior courtyard, providing staff and patrons connection with nature and daylight.
 - ✓ Access to daylight and outdoor views is found throughout the site.
 - ✓ No strobing or flickering was noticed.
 - ✓ Many spaces within the SIMS building offer direct connection to windows with many offices including window shades. The shades support with managing glare, lighting and heat while maintaining connection to the natural environment. This also support with managing the overall lighting intensity without dramatic adjustment to changes in lighting levels.
- ✓ Contrast is excellent throughout the building including between the floors, walls and trim. Dark trim provides high contrasted to the white walls and coloured floorings.
- ✓ There is good colour contrast between walls and floors in most areas, which supports wayfinding, while door frames in contrasting colours make doorways easy to identify.



Circulation

Doors

- ✔ Where doors have been upgraded, vision panels are either full-length or elongated, ensuring that people of all heights can see through the window.
- ✔ Many doors swing inwards and out of the path of travel.
- ✔ The doors are high contrast and frequently feature sidelights.

Flooring

- ✔ The flooring features low-pattern, non-slip surfaces that help prevent visual fatigue or dizziness.
- ✔ The flooring is non-slip and consistent throughout the space.
- ✔ Where carpeting is used, it is low-pile and easy to navigate with a wheeled mobility device.

Amenities

- ✔ Water fountains are accessible in height and approach.

Interior Stairs

- ✔ Stairs generally have graspable bilateral handrails and non-slip treads making them safe and supportive for those with balance disabilities.
- ✔ The stairs have closed risers.
- ✔ The stairs have non-slip strips on the tread.
- ✔ The stairs are generally well lit thanks to the balance between artificial lighting and large adjacent windows.



Circulation

Lifts

- ✔ There are two lifts located at this site to compensate for two areas where a change in level occurs.
 - ✔ One is decommissioned at the stairs leading from a previous accessible entrance
 - ✔ Another is provided to descend and ascend the steps that connect the lower level where the dance room is located with the main upper level.
- ✔ The lift equipped with a chime and visual indicator notification which provides audio and visual feedback to draw attention to the lift being in use.
- ✔ Once a user has the key, it is independently operated.
- ✔ The lift platform is sufficient large for a manual wheelchair user and a companion or someone using another smaller mobility device such as a walker. It is not likely large enough for a person using a mobility scooter or power wheelchair.
- ✔ The barriers to prevent someone from rolling off of the platform function as intended.
- ✔ The lift provides a level threshold for a user to navigate onto and off of the lift.





Barriers & Recommendations: Circulation

Lighting and Contrast

- Some individuals who are neurodiverse can see the flicker of the fluorescent lighting, creating additional extra-sensory input which can be very difficult for some. Additionally, fluorescent lighting is known to cause headaches and increase feelings of anxiety and malaise. Fluorescent lights, especially older or poorly maintained ones, can produce electromagnetic interference (EMI) that affects the performance of hearing aids and other assistive listening devices. This EMI can cause a buzzing, humming, or static sound in the hearing aid, which is not only annoying but can also make it harder for the user to hear and understand speech.
- The bright, directional nature of LED lighting can sometimes create harsh glare, especially if the fixtures aren't properly shielded or positioned. This can lead to visual discomfort and reduced contrast perception. Ensure that all LED lighting is properly shielded or angled in such a way to reduce glare on wayfinding, computer screens, glazing etc.

Recommendation:

- It's recommended to swap any non-LED light bulbs for LED models, particularly those that have a flicker rate of at least 1000 Hz. At this rate, individuals with heightened sensory sensitivities are unlikely to pick up on the flickering effects.

Doors

- Many doors, including access to multi-purpose rooms and the accessible washroom still use knobs as door handles. Lever-style door handles offer a more inclusive and user-friendly design than traditional round knobs. Their simple push-down motion allows people with limited grip strength, arthritis, or full hands to open doors with ease, sometimes even using an elbow or forearm. By reducing the need for fine motor control, levers make every entry point more accessible and dignified for all users.

Recommendation:

- It's highly recommended to replace any existing knobs with lever-style handles.
- It's recommended to prioritize the accessible washroom.



Barriers & Recommendations: Circulation

Lifts

Main Lift

Recommendations:

- Since a key required for operation, it's imperative to establish a clear process for access.
 - Post visible laminated signage explaining lift operation and key retrieval.
 - Include procedure in rental agreements for user awareness.
 - Ensure renters or staff receive training and possibly sign-off for lift use.

Decommissioned Lift

This lift was told to us that it is no longer functioning but was part of the building when I was used as a school.

Recommendations

- If possible, it's highly recommended to repair this lift, if possible, and use this entrance as an alternative entrance for folks with disabilities.
- If the lift is not easily repaired, consider removing it as it does not serve the function it's intended to serve and simply prevents someone from using the handrail to exit the building.
- If neither is feasible, consider adding a small sign indicating that the feature is not available and to redirect people towards the main entrance.



Accessibility Idea

Develop a posted quick-guide for safe lift use using both visuals and text to ensure comprehension by all patrons especially since it isn't completely clear on where to use the key and that the button must be pushed for the entire length of the trip.



Stairs

In General

- ✓ Bilateral, graspable and continuous handrails are provided on all interior stairs.
- ✓ The stair treads have rubberized non-slip textured material.
- ✓ The stairs to the dressing room area have significant contrast on the ascent with the rise being treated with a black rubberized trim making them very visible.



Barriers & Recommendations: Stairs

Dressing Room Stairs & Upstairs Office/Meeting Room Stairs

- Access to the green rooms and dressing rooms behind the gymnasium as well as the upper-level office/meeting room are only available by stairs with no alternative.
- While the hand rails are graspable they are not best practice in that someone's fingers do not completely wrap around the handrail to provide complete balance support. Additionally, the hand rails do not have extensions on the landings which are used for people to transition from an incline to a level position as well as being available to provide tactile information to people who are blind

Recommendations

- Ensure that renters are made aware that the green rooms and dressing rooms are only available by stairs and consider providing alternatives shared you be made aware of a performer with a disability.
- When completing a more significant renovation it's highly recommended to ensure that the handrails are round and graspable as well as have a minimum of **300mm** of horizontal extension on each landing.



Recommendations: Stairs

Best Practice

- It is highly recommended to install attention tactile walking surface indicators (TWSI), preferably as truncated domes with contrast on the top landing for ALL stairs. This feature not only increases the contrast and visibility of the stairs but also support individuals who are blind in locating the stairs and identifying the area as having a change in grade.
 - The TWSIs do not need to be “high vis yellow” necessarily, just a colour that offers contrast to the surrounding floor. Yellow is frequently used for its visibility at night as well as it being the last colour that is lost when someone is losing their sight.
 - This recommendation also extends to the stairs within the viewing stands of the arena.



Courtyard

- ✓ The entrances to the courtyard are available via a relatively level and flush thresholds of doors leading from the main corridor.
- ✓ The courtyard offers access to the outdoors and a calm place to meet or enjoy a break. There is shade and opportunities for beautiful landscaping, activities and rest.



Barriers & Recommendations: Courtyard

- Consider ways of activating the space with greater intention such as creating a variety of heights of planters, including sensory elements such as an herb garden and updating the seating and picnic tables.
- Raised and varied height planters for universal access to the rooftop urban agriculture area would be recommended. Planters at a variety of heights as well as some with knee clearance would be recommended to ensure that all members of the community could participate in the community garden regardless of their ability to stand, bend or reach.



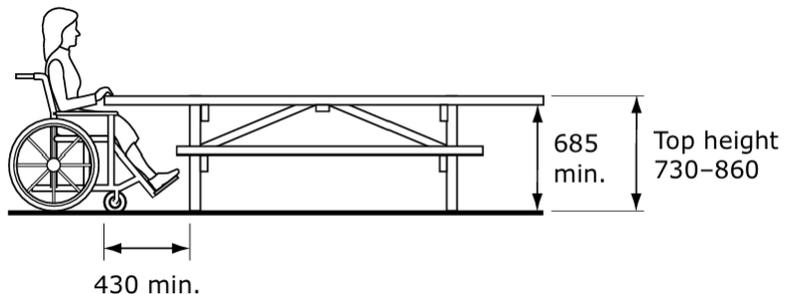
Reference:
<https://kidsgardening.org/resources/designing-a-school-garden-create-an-accessible-garden/>

Long term

- Consider installing an automatic door operator on a set of doors leading into the courtyard.



Reference: Marco Pasqua sits at two different universally designed picnic tables



Reference: CSA B651-23
 Figure 64a



Gymnasium

The gymnasium is a highly utilized multi functional space that is the hub and core of this facility.

- ✔ The entrance is recessed, and the doors open outward, keeping swing paths out of the main corridor, which reduces accidental collisions with passersby.
 - ✔ The double doors include one set of doors that are operable with an automatic door operator with the included decal noting which door will swing open.
- ✔ Benches are available along the side, giving players and caregivers a place to sit between activities.
- ✔ There is additional spectator seating thanks to the fold-away bleachers.
- ✔ Curtain used to divide the space functions but is available for multi-purpose use.
- ✔ Lighting levels are manageable and reconfigurable with additional colourful and fun options being provided for activities such as roller skating.
- ✔ The AV system in the gymnasium is quite comprehensive with lighting and sound options.
- ✔ A stage is provided though not frequently used.



Barriers & Recommendations: Gymnasium

- The curtain is heavy, dirty, and dusty which creates air quality and maintenance issues. Review ways of having the curtain cleaned or replaced with a barrier that serves the same purpose but is easier, safer and healthier for the staff team to maneuver.
- Sound can build up during busy programs. Consider adding acoustic treatments such as ceiling baffles or acoustic panels on high walls to reduce echo, improving communication and reducing overall acoustic stimulation.
- The change rooms for the gymnasium have been more or less decommissioned and turned into storage. Long-term, it's highly advised to review the change rooms and upgrade them so that they can be used for their intended purpose of providing hygiene and personal items storage for activities being held in the gymnasium.
- It's also highly recommended to investigate the opportunity to install a lift or elevator to access the changing rooms or relocate a changing and showering facility to elsewhere in the building that is already physically accessible.



Multi-Purpose Rooms

In General

- ✓ The rooms are wide and open, which makes it easy to set up different activities and still keep clear paths for movement and passing.
- ✓ Some of the rooms include large windows bringing in daylight, with shades available to control glare during presentations or quiet activities.
- ✓ The multi-purpose room's ceiling panels are noise-dampening, which helps reduce echoes overall volume.
- ✓ Doors are frequently equipped with lever dial handles and fully glazed vision panels for ease and safety of doors opening and closing.
- ✓ Room spaces are marked with consistent room signage, generally mounted on the wall on the latch side of the door.

Dance Room

- ✓ The dance room floor was upgraded to a floating floor which required it to be raised. Access was maintained to the space thanks to the inclusion of a small ramp.
 - ✓ The ramp is short and well managed with a very reasonable slope.
 - ✓ The edges of the ramp have been marked with high visibility tape.
- ✓ The space is large and provides ample space for dance, movement and yoga-type activities.
- ✓ Nearly full-length mirrors are provided

Music Room

- ✓ The space is large and provides ample space for music and the storage of musical equipment.
- ✓ Sound dampening materials already installed on walls and ceiling.



Barriers & Recommendations: Multi-Purpose Rooms

Short-Term

Dance Room

- The other two exit doors, though infrequently used, still have a step that is unexpected when exiting or entering the dance space. It's highly recommended to add a contrast strip to the nosing of the step and consider adding a small sign at eye level on the door indicating the presence of a step.

Music Room

- Additional sound management may be needed between music and dance rooms as this has been expressed as a concern by both staff and users.

Upstairs Office / Counselling Space

- Add a safer locking mechanism for the emergency exit window.



Accessibility Idea

Collaborate with local yarn/knitting clubs to create wall tapestries that provide both sound dampening and aesthetic enhancement.

Long-Term

- Lighting remains as primarily fluorescent, which can cause eye strain, headaches, or discomfort for some users. Consider assessing the fixtures and replacing them with low-flicker, high-quality LED lighting, so the room is comfortable for longer stays and easier on the eyes during detailed tasks or movement activities.



Community Kitchen

- ✓ The room is wide and open with clear paths for movement and passing around tables and cooking equipment.
- ✓ There are large windows bringing in daylight and connecting people to the exterior environment.
- ✓ Cupboards are varied in height with most storage options being in the bottom cabinets.
- ✓ There are microwaves at multiple heights including some which are placed on the counter with counter space available to place hot items.
- ✓ Stoves have counter space directly next to them, allowing for the placement of hot items quickly being taken out of the oven.
- ✓ Sinks have easy to operate faucet controls with the soap dispenser within reach.
- ✓ A large mirror over the instructor's table provides visibility for students, overhead.



Barriers & Recommendations

Short-Term

- Move microwaves to counter height, ensuring that people of all heights can easily and safely remove hot items.
- Consider providing a step stool for anyone shorter of stature.

Long-Term

- When replacing the ranges, consider purchasing ones with the knobs on the front panel rather than the rear preventing people from reaching over hot elements to adjust the stove's temperature.
- When possible, it's recommended to replace one table with a height adjustable table allowing for an ergonomic set up for people of various heights and accommodating a power wheelchair user.
- Where possible, provide knee clearance under at least one sink community kitchen; this can be done by creating a cut-out section behind cabinet doors rather than removing them.



Administration Areas & Reception

Service Window

- ✓ The counter height at the service window is accessible to people of all heights despite there not being an area designated of lowered counter or knee clearance.
- ✓ The administration offices are marked with signage mounted on the service window.

Staff Offices

- ✓ Offices are large enough for their intended purposes and furnished with ergonomic office furnishings including adjustable height desks, office chairs with wheels and additional lighting.
- ✓ Sit-to-stand desks are available where it makes sense and upon request.
- ✓ There is ample lighting including natural thanks to the windows with shades and artificial overhead fluorescent lighting.
- ✓ Offices include seating for guests, where appropriate.
- ✓ The presence of plants creates a bright and welcoming atmosphere.

Staff Washroom

- ✓ Within the administration area, there is a small single-user washroom. The washroom isn't designated as accessible but it would be workable for many people.
- ✓ The sink faucet is easy to operate with the soap and paper towel dispensers within reach.
- ✓ The toilet is tank model offering additional back support.

Lunchroom

- ✓ The kitchen features a range of storage options for supplies, a significant amount of counter space and a counter-height coffee maker.
- ✓ The sink has a soap dispenser within reach of someone using the sink and the faucet is operable with ease with the controls are within reach of people of all heights (despite there being no knee clearance under the sink).
- ✓ The fridge door swings open towards the counter surface.



Administration Areas & Reception

Meeting Room

- ✔ All chairs are ergonomic wheeled office chairs with armrests allowing for the space to be easily configured based on need.
- ✔ Tables provide adequate knee clearance and are also on wheels allowing for a reconfiguration as preferred.
 - ✔ Note: The most accessible meeting room set up is u-shaped which allows people to see each other when speaking supplementing auditory input with the ability to see facial expressions and lip reading.
- ✔ The room is well-lit including large windows and overhead lighting. The glare and heat from the windows is well managed thanks to the exterior tree canopy.
- ✔ The white-board is mounted at an accessible height.



Recommendations

- A hearing loop in the meeting room is highly recommended to support those with auditory disabilities in receiving the information directly into their hearing aids or cochlear implants.
- Consider providing some chairs that are without wheels or have wheel locks as wheeled chairs can be very disorienting for someone who is blind.

Barriers & Recommendations: Administration Areas

Staff Offices

- The reception desk counter is quite high, especially for someone shorter of stature or seated but the service counter would offer this accommodation rather than recommending a lowered area of counter at the reception desk.
- Staff commented on the intensity of the lighting and not liking having the overhead lights turned on due to the lighting all being fluorescent. Staff have brought in their own lighting to use rather than the overhead lights.

Recommendations:

- It's highly recommended to upgrade all lighting to LED

Staff Washroom

Recommendations:

- The space can be made more accessible by making a few updates (though the washroom is still too small for someone using a wheelchair to use independently):
 - Replace the door knob with a lever handle.
 - Add an angled grab bar on the wall adjacent to the toilet to provide some additional balance
 - Lower the mirror (to **1000 mm** from the floor) and paper towel dispenser (to **1200 mm** from the floor) to support someone shorter of stature or seated.

Lunchroom

Recommendations:

- Lower the microwave to counter height for safety and accessibility. It's currently mounted at a height that can be dangerous for many and inaccessible for people shorter in stature or seated.
- It's highly recommended to move the paper towel dispenser to within reach of someone's using the sink (or provide an extra roll/dispenser near the sink). It's currently mounted at a height that would be out of reach for a person of shorter of stature or someone seated.

Best Practices:

- Where possible, provide knee clearance under the sink in the staff kitchen; this can be done by creating a cut-out section behind cabinet doors rather than removing them.
- When replacing the stove, a model with front mounted controls is highly recommended to ensure that people are not reaching across hot surfaces.



Washrooms: Gendered

Signage and Access

- ✔ Signage, mounted on the wall, includes text information as well as the gender icons.

Toilets and Urinals

- ✔ The toilet paper dispensers are generally within reach of someone seated on the toilet.
- ✔ The urinals extend all the way to the floor ensuring that they are accessible by people of all heights.
- ✔ There is sufficient approach to the urinals to provide accessibility for people with limited mobility or who are using mobility devices.
- ✔ The toilets being manual flush models is appreciated as automatic flushing toilets can be very loud and uncomfortable for children and people who are neurodiverse or who have sound sensitivities.

Sink and Mirrors

- ✔ The mirrors are mounted at a height that allows someone seated or shorter stature to view themselves in the mirror.
- ✔ The soap dispenser and paper towel are mounted within reach of someone using at least one sink.
- ✔ A step stool is provided and is very much appreciated by children, allowing them to wash and dry their hands with independence and without relying on an adult to lift them.





Barriers & Recommendations: Washrooms

Gendered washrooms

The gendered washrooms do not have an accessible stall and are not marked as being accessible. When considering a significant renovation upgrading one of the stalls in each of the banks of washrooms to an accessible stall would be highly recommended.

Entrances into the washrooms are narrow but serviceable especially given the complete accessibility of the single user washroom located across the lobby.

Recommendations:

Short-Term

- The washroom signage is recommended to include a raised icon and letters providing tactile information for someone who's blind and ideally Braille.
 - Considering including a baby symbol to indicate the availability of a baby change table within the washroom.
 - lower the signage to **1500 mm** center line from the floor.
- Blade signage for this washrooms, mounted above the door is highly recommended to provide visibility at a distance particularly given the strange layout of the washrooms with entrances being located both off of the hallways and the lobby.
- The current placement of the sanitary disposal units and toilet paper units are quite high and is recommended to be mounted at a height of between **600 mm and 800 mm** from the floor and the toilet paper dispenser within **300 mm** of the front edge of the toilet.
- It's highly recommended to add an additional hook at a height of **11 00 mm** from the floor in each stall.
- The locking mechanisms are highly recommended to be replaced with ones that does not require fine dexterity.
- The lighting in the washroom is highly recommended to be updated so that it is not fluorescent lighting especially given the small space.
- Consider installing additional soap dispensers so that individuals have soap dispensers within reach of more than one sink.
- Additional mirrors in front of the other sinks in the men's washroom would be recommended allowing for more than one user at a time to see themselves reflected in the mirror.



Barriers & Recommendations: Washrooms

Recommendations:

Short-Term (Continued)

- Consider providing bilateral vertical grab bars for at least one of the urinals to provide additional balance and safety for individuals with limited stability.

Long-Term

- The faucets on the sink are difficult to operate especially for children and people with limited dexterity. It would be highly advised to replace this with faucets that do not require a turning of the wrist or significant force.
- Knee clearance at, at least one of the sinks in each of the gendered washrooms would be highly recommended.
- Given the nature of the facility, it would be highly recommended to provide a toilet and sink that are at child height.



Washrooms: Accessible/Universal

Signage and Access

- ✓ The washroom is marked with the symbol of accessibility on the door.
- ✓ The door is very highly contrasted from the adjacent wall space being dark green against a light beige wall.
- ✓ The washroom space provides good turning radius and allows for an accessible approach to the toilet both in front and laterally for transfer.

Toilet

- ✓ The toilet features a horizontal grab bar behind the toilet and an angled grab bar adjacent to it. The toilet also includes a tank which provides back rest and trunk support for those who require it.
- ✓ The toilet paper dispenser is within reach of someone seated on the toilet.
- ✓ The toilet seat height is comfortable and meets best practice for accessibility.

Sink and Mirror

- ✓ The mirror is mounted at a height that allows someone seated to view themselves in the mirror.
- ✓ The washrooms features a sink with easy to operate controls and provided knee clearance as well as the soap and paper towel dispensers within reach of someone using the sink.
 - ✓ Having the soap and paper towel dispenser within reach of someone using the sink is highly appreciated as this allows someone to completely wash and dry their hands before touching any mobility devices or equipment.
- ✓ The provision of paper towel dispenser rather than a hand dryer is appreciated as many members of the disability community are highly sensitive to noise and hand dryers can be deeply uncomfortable for many. Additionally, those with health disabilities or who have additional hygiene needs appreciate the availability of paper towels.



Barriers & Recommendations: Washrooms

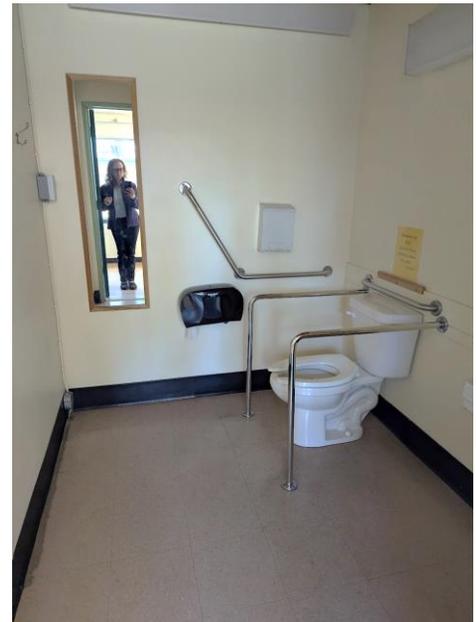
Accessible washroom

The configuration of the grab bars is a little bit strange and inadvertently creates a barrier preventing people from successfully transferring to the toilet using a side transfer from mobility device as the grab bar going from the wall to the floor impedes on the intended lateral transfer space.

Short-Term

Recommendations:

- The washroom signage is recommended to be mounted on the wall latch-side and include the icon of a toilet and the universal symbol of accessibility. The signage should include a raised icon and letters providing tactile information for someone who's blind and ideally Braille.
 - Room signage is recommended to be mounted on the latch side of the door to ensure that it is visible whether the door is open or closed and available consistently for someone who is blind.
 - If considering upgrading the washroom signage to be a universal washroom it's highly recommended to use a symbol of a toilet or both gender icons as opposed to the split icon as this icon can be difficult for those with cognitive disabilities to understand.
- Blade signage for this washroom mounted above the door is highly recommended to provide visibility at a distance particularly from the lobby and down the hallway leading from the lift.
- The doorknob is highly recommended to be replaced with a lever handle which is easier and more intuitive for people to use either during an emergency or for those people with limited dexterity in their hands.
- Given the configuration of the rear wall mounted horizontal grab bar and the adjacent angled grab bar it's actually recommended to remove the two extra grab bars that go from the wall to the floor. Removing these two grab bars would actually increase the turning radius within the washroom and the accessibility of the toilet itself.
 - If community members require an additional grab bar a folding grab bar is recommended which can be used when necessary unfolded away to allow the user access to the lateral transfer space.





Barriers & Recommendations: Washrooms

- The current placement of the sanitary disposal unit is quite high and is recommended to be mounted beneath the grab bar
- It's highly recommended to add an additional hook at a height of **1100 mm** from the floor.
- The locking mechanism is highly recommended to be replaced with one that does not require fine dexterity.
- A small shelf near the sink would be recommended to allow people to store personal items while washing their hands.
- The lighting in the washroom is highly recommended to be updated so that it is not fluorescent lighting especially given the small space.



Long-Term

- Whenever possible, it's highly recommended to install an automatic door operator for this washroom to provide independent access for someone using a mobility device.



Barriers & Recommendations: Change Rooms

In the basement, there are decommissioned change rooms and storage space along with an all-gender washroom. The space is accessed only via a set of stairs. The space is therefore not accessible and is currently only used by a small number of groups, however, when completing a more extensive renovation of the facility, it is highly recommended to add accessibility to this space by:

- Providing an accessible path of travel thanks to a lift or elevator;
- If showers are provided, ensuring that at least one is a roll-in shower with a fold down shower bench and appropriate grab bars;
- Upgrade the Gender Inclusive washroom to be truly accessible; and
- Consider investing in an adult change bench.

While the space may not be well used at the moment,, the facility could be used as Emergency Operations Command or a Reception center in the case of a large-scale evacuation in the area. These features would ensure that evacuees can safely and comfortably shower and perform the basics of other hygiene needs.



Wayfinding

- ✔ Signage throughout the recreation is limited but does include room signage for key amenities such as the multi-purpose rooms, washrooms and administration office.
- ✔ Washroom signage includes icons.
- ✔ There is excellent signage providing information for available programs at the center.

Understanding Wayfinding

Imagine navigating a complex building with ease, feeling confident and in control rather than overwhelmed. This is the result of a thoughtfully designed wayfinding system, which incorporates braille, tactile elements, high-contrast signage, and intuitive icons strategically placed throughout the space.

For individuals who are blind or have low vision, tactile signage with raised characters and braille is essential. It enables them to independently access critical information, including room numbers, directions, and emergency exits, enhancing their autonomy and safety within the environment.

High-contrast signage, with light text on a dark background or vice versa, makes it easier for people with visual disabilities to read and comprehend information quickly.

Intuitive icons and pictograms are another powerful tool for accessibility. They transcend language barriers and provide a universal understanding of key features and directions. For individuals with cognitive disabilities or anxiety, these visual cues can help break down complex information into manageable chunks, reducing stress and confusion.

By providing clear, unobstructed paths and directional signage at appropriate heights, we ensure that everyone can navigate the space with ease. When the signage is visible at a distance, it allows people to make decisions on their path of travel and ensure they are using the most efficient and effective route of travel to their intended destination.



Did you know?

Sans serif fonts are considered the most accessible since they streamline the reading process by eliminating visual distractions, making them the go-to choice for maximum readability and accessibility.



Recommendations: Wayfinding

- Consider developing a consistent wayfinding strategy that encompasses an Island-wide consistent use of icons, tactile elements and braille.
- Consider installing either decals or blade signage for key amenities areas such those located down corridors, including washrooms and multi-purpose rooms.
- Develop an overall wayfinding strategy for the site that includes directional signage at decision points as well as blade signage that is visible at a distance.
 - Include key amenities such as the location of washrooms, change rooms, multi-purpose spaces and the accessible washroom.
 - Signage should be comprehensive and easily visible at a distance ensuring that people can independently determine their path of travel without doubling back and exerting additional energy.
- Where room signage is found mounted on the door, it makes it inaccessible when the door is opened as well as not available for those with low vision. It is recommended to mount signage on the wall, latch-side, at a height of **1,500 mm** centerline. The room signage would also benefit from ideally both braille and tactile components, but at minimum tactile icons and language.
- Ensure that the icons accurately reflect the features found within the washroom stall. Where washrooms are not accessible either due to turning radius or lack of grab bars, note these as either limited mobility or single user stalls.
- Where washrooms or locker rooms have been decommissioned it's highly recommended to remove the signage from these facilities to ensure that the expectations of what is provided match the functions of the site.



Did you know?



Using the dynamic accessibility symbol instead of the traditional symbol helps break down attitudinal barriers and helps redefine how we look at people with disabilities.



Emergency Systems

- ✓ The entire facility is equipped with auditory fire alarm.
- ✓ Emergency maps are clear, well-placed, non-reflective, and easy to read. They are mounted at accessible heights and are generally low-glare.
- ✓ Exits are well marked with overhead signage.
- ✓ There are many accessible emergency exits that have a level and flush threshold and connects directly to the exterior of the building.
- ✓ Safety equipment, including fire extinguishers and fire pull stations are well-marked and generally located in accessible locations and mounted at accessible heights.



Barriers & Recommendations: Emergency Systems

Short-Term

- Emergency map could be single-sided to avoid shadow confusion as currently the image on the back-side of the paper can be seen which can make the content more difficult to perceive.

Long-Term

- If completing more significant renovations, it is highly recommended to provide visual fire alarms throughout the building but particularly in spaces where people are likely to be alone such as washrooms. Visual fire alarms support individuals who are hard of hearing or are Deaf to be independently aware of an emergency situation.
- When completing a more significant renovation, consider replacing the current red exit signs with green 'running person' models. Using the green running person exit signage throughout the buildings is recommended as well as including the signage that features the accessibility icon to note accessible egress routes.
 - The running person pictogram is an intuitive, universally recognized symbol that clearly conveys the message to exit quickly in an emergency. It relies less on language comprehension compared to text-only "Exit" signs and therefore benefits people with cognitive disabilities, low literacy, or those who speak different languages.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

When speaking of accommodations

- Persons with disabilities like to know in advance of what is available to them and what accommodations might be available. Keep descriptions broadly specific and ideally provide a photo on amenities on webpages. For example, rather than saying “Completely Accessible” or “Wheelchair Accessible,” give examples of what is available such as “The washrooms feature automatic door operators, grab bars adjacent and behind the toilet and knee clearance at the sink.”

Listening

- Hearing loops in theatres and large lecture spaces such as meeting rooms and gymnasiums are always advised but an individual FM system may also be supportive for an individual with a cochlear implant or hearing aids. An individualized hearing loop, is a portable device which allows for information to be sent directly from a device worn around the speaker’s neck to the user’s hearing device. This could amplify communications at both the information desk and in the community meeting room.
- It’s good practice to ensure that closed captions are enabled for presentations (For example PowerPoint offers built in closed captions for presentations) and all videos. Many individuals including those with auditory processing learning disabilities benefit greatly from captions.



Participation

- Universally designed equipment and programs is naturally more accommodating for people of all sizes and abilities.
- Consider including a statement on program registration or RSVPs that encourage people to share any accommodations or accessibility-related needs.
- Sensory friendly kits are recommended to be available for loan.

Sensory Kits

- Sensory kits are collections of tools designed to support individuals who experience sensory sensitivities or regulation challenges, including those who are neurodivergent. They create a more inclusive and calming environment in public, educational, or recreational settings by helping individuals manage overstimulation and maintain focus or comfort.
- Providing sensory kits demonstrates a proactive commitment to accessibility and inclusion by recognizing invisible disabilities and ensuring that all community members can participate meaningfully.
- Typical items include:
 - Fidget tools (for tactile stimulation and focus)
 - Noise-cancelling headphones (to reduce auditory overload)
 - Communication boards or picture cards (for non-verbal communication support)
 - Weighted lap pads or stress balls (to promote calm and self-regulation)
 - Sunglasses or visors (to help manage light sensitivity)
 - Other considerations would be small quiet activities such as colouring
- Consider developing a social story that can be shared with teachers or available on the website as a downloadable resource. These stories allow people of all ages to understand what to expect from an environmental perspective and also what the expectations are for social interactions and behavior. Social stories are usually written in the first person, using positive, reassuring language. They often include pictures and simple language.



PRIORITIZATION

When considering making changes to increase accessibility, thinking about the entire 'path of accessibility.' That is, is the complete process of accessing and using a space accessible? Where possible, we advocate for creating complete accessible spaces rather than adding piecemeal accessibility supports. For example, we advocate for a singular accessible washroom rather than a number of washrooms with a variety of accessibility features.

Our recommended priorities based on both access and impact include:

Highest Priority

- One of the highest priority accessibility recommendations would be to replace the fluorescent lighting with LED as this was brought up a number of times as a point of concern and discomfort from staff.
- Improve wayfinding and signage consistence, including adding tactile room signage mounted on the wall for primary spaces including washrooms, changerooms, community rooms and other public-facing spaces.

Short Term

- Add contrast to stair nosings to increase visibility.
- Add high contrast, tactile walking surface indicator strips (truncated domes) to the top landings of stairs.
- Provide more information on the recreation center's website on the accessibility features available at SIMS.
- Add blade signage to the washrooms, particularly the accessible washrooms.
- Remove the extra grab bars in the accessible washroom.
- Add signage to the lift and instructions for staff on how to use it and where to locate the key.
- Create a loanable sensory kit.

Long Term

- Provide a hearing loop or similar assistive listening device at key locations, ideally in the meeting room and when possible, in the gymnasium a primary multi purpose room.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Parking & Approach

Transit & Pedestrian Access

- Review the parking space provided to meet needs of program users, including sufficient space for vehicles with accessibility requirements.

Entrance & Wayfinding & Pathways

- Add more robust exterior signage so the building name is visible at a distance.
- Add pathway lighting leading to the main entrance to enhance nighttime safety and visibility.

Accessible Parking Stalls

- Relocate the accessible stall to a flatter, wider location closer to the ramp.
- Update paint and signage using the dynamic accessibility symbol and a blue square for contrast and visibility.
- Provide additional temporary accessible parking for key programs or events.

Ramps

Secondary (Decommissioned) Ramp

- Add directional signage to the parking lot and at the base of ramps highlighting the main entrance.
- Add contrast to the nosing and bottom transition of the ramp to highlight tripping hazards.
- Add a small ramp to access the playground, replacing the current step.

Primary Access Ramp

- Extend handrails further down the ramp, especially around the corner by the tree.
- Repair uneven surfaces caused by tree roots and add edge protection (using stones/bricks for cane detectability).
- Add a wall-mounted handrail on the ramp connecting the landing to the entrance landing; replace existing handrail with a round, graspable design.
- Relocate the bike rack away from the top intersection between the stairs and ramp.
- Add landings at intervals to allow users to rest.

Emergency Exit Ramp (Rear)

- Block off or gate the unused steps beside the emergency exit ramp.

Stairs and Steps (Exterior)

- Add contrast strips on stair nosings (tread and rise).
- Repair tread deterioration and ensure even, stable surfaces.
- Install tactile walking surface indicators (TWSIs) on top landings of all stairs.

Lobby

Seating and Furniture

- Ensure that a variety of seating options with backrests and armrests continue to be provided.
- Maintain tables that offer adequate knee clearance for mobility-device users.

Visual and Wayfinding Cues

- Ensure contrast between flooring types (e.g., carpet vs. linoleum) remains strong.
- Consider adding tactile or visual cues linking the lobby to adjacent corridors and key amenities.

Lighting

- Maintain balanced lighting levels between indoor and outdoor spaces to minimize glare.

Circulation

Navigation

- Ensure circulation paths remain logical and unobstructed throughout the facility.
- Maintain accessibility of all primary amenities via clear, direct routes.

Building Controls

- Confirm that all controls (heat, lighting, AV, door operators, etc.) remain at accessible heights.
- Verify that controls can be operated without fine dexterity.
- Standardize lever-style handles on doors throughout the facility.

Lighting and Contrast

- Replace all fluorescent lighting with high-quality LED fixtures rated at or above 1000 Hz.
- Ensure LED fixtures are properly shielded or angled to reduce glare on wayfinding signage, computer screens, and glass surfaces.
- Maintain consistent colour contrast between floors, walls, and door frames.
- Use window shades to manage glare while maintaining access to natural light.

Doors

- Replace remaining knob-style door handles with lever handles.
- Maintain elongated vision panels on doors, ensuring visibility for people of all heights.
- Verify that door swings do not interfere with main travel paths.

Flooring

- Use low-pattern, non-slip flooring throughout corridors and rooms.
- Maintain low-pile carpeting in designated areas for easy navigation by wheeled devices.

Interior Stairs

- Ensure all interior stairs have bilateral, continuous, graspable handrails.
- Maintain closed risers and non-slip treads with contrasting nosings.

Lifts

- Ensure the main lift remains fully operational and includes clear, posted signage explaining key use and operation.
- Repair or remove the decommissioned lift at the previous accessible entrance.
- Provide an easy-to-read laminated quick guide for lift operation with both visual and text instructions.
- Include lift use procedures in rental agreements and provide training to staff and renters

Stairs

General

- Maintain bilateral, continuous, graspable handrails on all interior and exterior stairs.
- Ensure stair treads have non-slip, rubberized surfacing and closed risers.
- Add or refresh contrast strips on stair nosings (tread and rise) throughout the facility.
- Repair worn or uneven stair treads.
- Install tactile walking-surface indicators (TWSIs) on top landings of all stairways.

Dressing Room and Upper-Level Stairs

- Add or replace handrails with round, fully graspable designs that extend at least 300 mm horizontally at each landing.
- Notify renters that dressing rooms and certain upper-level spaces are stair-only and provide alternatives when accommodating performers or users with disabilities.

Arena and Viewing-Stand Stairs

- Apply tactile walking-surface indicators to the top landings within the viewing stands.
- Maintain consistent lighting levels on stairs adjacent to large windows to reduce glare or shadowing.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS (4)

Courtyard

- Maintain level, flush thresholds at doors leading to the courtyard.
- Introduce varied-height planters, including some with knee clearance, to support inclusive gardening activities.
- Incorporate sensory elements such as herbs or textured plants into courtyard landscaping.
- Upgrade or replace existing seating and picnic tables with models offering backrests and armrests.
- Consider adding shade structures or varied seating zones to encourage use throughout the day.

Gymnasium

- Clean or replace the heavy, dusty curtain used to divide the gymnasium.
- Add acoustic treatments such as ceiling baffles or wall panels.
- Review and upgrade change rooms adjacent to the gymnasium for renewed accessibility.
- Install a lift or elevator to access change rooms or relocate changing and shower facilities to an accessible location.
- Upgrade lighting to high-quality LED fixtures.

Multi-Purpose Rooms

General

- Replace fluorescent lighting with low-flicker LED fixtures.
- Maintain open layouts with clear circulation paths.
- Ensure large windows have functional shades to control glare during presentations or activities.
- Preserve sound-dampening ceiling panels to reduce echo and reverberation.
- Maintain consistent room signage with clear icons and contrasting backgrounds.

Dance Room

- Add contrast strips to the nosing of the two exit-door steps.
- Install signage at eye level on each door indicating the presence of a step.

Music Room

- Address sound transfer between dance and music rooms through added acoustic separation.

Accessibility Idea

- Collaborate with local knitting or craft groups to create wall tapestries for sound dampening and visual warmth.

Community Kitchen

Short Term

- Relocate microwaves to counter height.
- Provide a step stool for users shorter in stature.
- Ensure sinks have lever-style faucet controls and soap dispensers within reach.

Long Term

- Replace ranges with models that have front-mounted controls.
- Replace one standard table with a height-adjustable table.
- Provide knee clearance beneath at least one sink.
- Maintain clear pathways between counters, tables, and appliances.

Administration Areas & Reception

Reception Area

- Add a hearing loop or portable assistive listening system at the reception desk.
- Confirm the reception desk includes a lowered counter section (maximum 865 mm high).
- Ensure clear knee space under the lowered counter section.
- Provide a staff-operated portable amplifier or speech-to-text app for accessibility as needed.

Meeting Rooms

- Add portable or installed hearing loops to larger meeting rooms.
- Install dimmable LED lighting and ensure switches are located near entrances.
- Provide flexible furniture arrangements that allow a minimum 900 mm circulation path between chairs and walls.
- Add clear signage with icons for "Meeting Room" and room numbering.

Staff Offices

- Replace overhead fluorescent fixtures with LED task lighting.
- Offer individual dimmable desk lamps where possible.
- Ensure adjustable-height desks are available in shared offices.
- Maintain cable management and floor organization to reduce trip hazards in shared workspaces.

Staff Offices

- Replace overhead fluorescent fixtures with LED task lighting.
- Offer individual dimmable desk lamps where possible.
- Ensure adjustable-height desks are available in shared offices.
- Maintain cable management and floor organization to reduce trip hazards in shared workspaces.

Staff Washroom

- Relocate or reconfigure interior fixtures (sink, soap dispenser, and toilet-paper holder) for improved reach range.
- Install tactile signage with braille outside the door at latch height.
- Ensure that grab bars meet current placement and clearance standards.

Lunchroom

- Reconfigure storage and counter spaces to ensure reachability from a seated position.
- Ensure microwave and refrigerator handles are operable with one hand and require minimal force.
- Maintain at least one table with 700 mm clear knee space beneath.
- Provide a quiet zone or soft-seating area within or near the lunchroom for staff needing sensory breaks.

Washrooms & Change Rooms

Gendered Washrooms

- Replace knob-style door handles with lever handles.
- Add blade signage and tactile icons at door latch height.
- Install grab bars that meet current standards for placement and spacing.
- Ensure all stall doors are light enough to open with minimal effort and self-close slowly.
- Provide hooks and shelves within stalls at accessible heights.
- Relocate or reconfigure interior fixtures (soap dispenser and sink) to allow more than one user.

Long Term

- Replace twist/turn faucets with lever or touch-activated models.
- Provide knee clearance at at least one sink in each gendered washroom.
- Install a child-height toilet and sink (one set per gendered washroom where feasible).

Accessible / Universal Washroom

- Reposition grab bars and accessories to meet current reach standards (horizontal and angled configurations).
- Install lever-style handles on all fixtures and doors.
- Add tactile signage with braille outside the door at latch height.
- Include a low-mounted mirror and accessible-height dispenser.
- Ensure the emergency alarm cord or push button is within reach from the floor.
- Mount room signage on the latch side of the door and include raised icons, tactile lettering, and braille.
- Add blade signage above the door, visible from the lobby and hallway near the lift.
- Remove the two vertical grab bars extending from the wall to the floor.
- Retain the horizontal and angled grab bars to provide necessary support.
- Install an automatic door operator for independent entry and exit.

Long Term

- Relocate the sanitary-disposal unit beneath the grab bar and add a hook at 1100 mm height.
- Add a small shelf near the sink for personal items.
- Replace fluorescent lighting with LED fixtures appropriate for small spaces.
- Maintain the mirror at a height visible to seated and standing users and retain paper-towel dispensers.
- Retain manual flush toilets to minimize loud automatic flushing sounds.

Change Rooms

- Provide an accessible route to the change rooms or relocate them to a main-floor area.
- Add adult-change bench within the change rooms.
- Ensure showers, if present, have handheld showerheads and fold-down seats.

Wayfinding

- Develop a consistent wayfinding strategy for the facility.
- Install blade signage for key amenities such as washrooms, change rooms, and multi-purpose rooms.
- Include tactile signage with raised characters and braille on all room signs.
- Ensure signage includes high-contrast backgrounds and clear, intuitive icons.

Wayfinding (continued)

- Add directional signage at decision points and intersections.
- Mount wall signage beside doors (on the latch side), not on doors themselves.
- Ensure consistent icon placement and design across the facility.

Emergency Systems

- Simplify and standardize emergency-evacuation maps, using large print and high contrast.

Long Term

- Add visual fire alarms (strobe lights) throughout all main areas of the facility.
- Upgrade exit signage to use the universal “running person” icon, with directional arrows to clarify egress routes.
- Ensure all fire extinguishers and pull stations remain clearly visible and unobstructed.
- Review all emergency doors to confirm adequate opening force and lever handles.

WHY IS CONTRAST SO IMPORTANT?

Contrast to support people with Low Vision

- Contrast makes things easier to identify and distinguish. High contrast between an object and its background helps those with low vision better perceive shapes, edges, and boundaries.
- It improves legibility and readability. When there is strong contrast between text and its background, it is easier for people who have low vision to read and interpret letters, words, and symbols.
- Contrast provides visual orientation. Things like doorways, handrails, and signage stand out better when there is significant contrast with surroundings. This aids navigation and independence.
- Reduced contrast contributes to eye strain and fatigue. Insufficient contrast makes visual tasks more difficult and tiring for those with low vision.

Contrast for Balance

- Contrast highlights edges and boundaries. When moving from seated to upright, high contrast along the edges of steps, floors, and thresholds makes these changes in level clearly visible. This prepares the body for adjustments.
- It defines spatial orientation. Contrast provides visual cues that help the brain orient itself in space, allowing for better balance control such as knowing where a wall, handrail or counter is helps stabilize our vision.
- Distinct edges guide movement. Clear definition where surfaces change, facilitated by contrast, guides body motions like getting up from a chair or exiting a vehicle.
- It draws attention to tripping hazards. Significant contrast makes irregularities in floors, pavements, ramps readily apparent so they can be navigated safely.
- Low contrast obscures surroundings. With inadequate contrast, visual environment blends together, depriving brain of key reference points needed to maintain equilibrium.

WHY DO ICONS MATTER?



Iconography

Icons are important for accessibility because they provide visual cues that can be quickly and easily understood by a wide range of users, regardless of their language skills, cognitive abilities, or sensory impairments.

Universal understanding: Well-designed icons transcend language barriers and can be interpreted by people from diverse backgrounds including folks who don't speak English as a first language.

Cognitive accessibility: Icons can help people with cognitive disabilities or learning difficulties to better understand and navigate their environment. Simple, clear icons reduce the cognitive load required to process information.

Wayfinding assistance: Consistent use of standardized icons throughout a building or site can aid in wayfinding, especially for individuals with intellectual disabilities or those who are unfamiliar with the space.

Benefit for people with low vision: When designed with high contrast and sufficient size, icons can be more easily perceived by people with low vision compared to text alone.

Supports non-readers: Icons can convey important information to individuals who have difficulty reading, whether due to a visual impairment, learning disability, or language barrier.

Key Considerations

- Use internationally recognized symbols, like the International Symbol of Access.
- Ensure adequate size and contrast for visibility.
- Place icons on signage that is mounted at an accessible height and providing clear floor space for approach.
- Utilize tactile icons with braille labels on signage to support users who are blind or have low vision.
- Maintain consistency in the design and use of icons throughout a site.
- Incorporate well-designed, universally understood icons to create environments that are more intuitive, easier to navigate, and accessible to a broader range of people.

Lighting for Comfort, Safety, and Well-Being

Appropriate lighting design plays a crucial role in creating safe, comfortable, and inclusive environments. The type of light, its colour temperature, and overall quality can significantly affect visual comfort, mood, and overall well-being. The following guidance provides best practices for selecting LED lighting that supports accessibility and user comfort across different settings.

Warm White Lighting for Comfort and Relaxation:

Recommended colour Temperature: 2700K–3000K

Warm white LED lights within this range produce a soft, yellowish glow similar to natural sunset light. This tone promotes relaxation, reduces visual fatigue, and minimizes glare sensitivity, making it ideal for residential areas, lounges, bedrooms, and dining spaces.

Key Benefits:

- Supports a calm and welcoming atmosphere
- Reduces eye strain and glare-related discomfort
- Mimics natural evening light, helping regulate circadian rhythm

Cool White Lighting for Productivity and Focus:

Recommended colour Temperature: 5000K–6500K

Cool or “daylight” white LEDs provide a bright, crisp illumination that enhances alertness and focus. These higher colour temperatures are well-suited to task-oriented spaces such as home offices, workshops, or study areas.

Key Benefits:

- Improves concentration and visual acuity for detailed work
- Simulates daylight conditions for improved energy and attentiveness

Considerations:

- Cooler lighting may feel harsh in relaxation zones and can disrupt sleep when used during evening hours. Where possible, limit use to daytime or work-specific settings.

Technical Considerations for Comfort and Safety

Flicker Control: Select LEDs with a low flicker percentage and low flicker index. High flicker levels can contribute to headaches, fatigue, and discomfort, particularly for individuals with light sensitivity or neurological conditions.

colour Rendering Index (CRI): A high CRI (90 or above) ensures accurate colour perception, contributing to safer navigation, improved aesthetics, and a more comfortable visual experience.

Blue Light Management: Blue light exposure, especially in the evening, can affect sleep quality and visual comfort. To mitigate these effects:

- Choose warm white or “tunable” LEDs that can adjust colour temperature throughout the day.
- Consider bulbs with built-in blue light filters to reduce eye strain and support healthy sleep cycles.

Why Avoid Fluorescent Lighting

Traditional fluorescent lighting, while once standard, presents several health and comfort concerns that make it less suitable for inclusive environments:

Flicker and Visual Fatigue: Fluorescent lights operate on alternating current, producing subtle but continuous flicker that can trigger headaches, eye strain, and nausea, especially for individuals sensitive to light.

Auditory Distraction: The low-level buzzing sound common in fluorescent fixtures can cause discomfort or distraction, particularly for individuals with auditory or sensory sensitivities such as autism or ADHD.

colour Quality: Fluorescent bulbs typically have a lower colour Rendering Index (CRI), which can distort colour perception and reduce visual clarity.

Environmental and Safety Concerns: Fluorescent tubes contain mercury, requiring special disposal and posing a hazard if broken.

As such, fluorescent lighting is not recommended for environments prioritizing accessibility, inclusion, and overall occupant well-being.

How LED Lighting Supports Neurodiverse Users

LED technology provides several advantages that make it especially supportive for neurodiverse individuals and others with sensory sensitivities:

- **Stable and Consistent Light Output:** High-quality LEDs with low flicker and even brightness help prevent sensory overload and visual discomfort.
- **Adjustable colour Temperature:** “Tunable” LEDs allow users to modify brightness and tone throughout the day, empowering people to create lighting conditions that match their sensory comfort levels.
- **Quiet Operation:** Unlike fluorescents, LEDs operate silently, eliminating ambient noise that can be distracting or overstimulating.
- **Customization and Control:** Integration with dimmers or smart systems enables personalized lighting zones, reducing sensory stress and supporting focus or calm as needed.
- **Improved colour Accuracy:** A high CRI ensures natural colour rendering, reducing confusion and enhancing comfort for users who are sensitive to distorted lighting environments.

By prioritizing LED solutions that minimize flicker, reduce blue light, and allow user control, spaces become more inclusive for people with sensory sensitivities, autism spectrum conditions, and other neurodiverse experiences.

THANK YOU

for choosing Meaningful Access Consulting

We are pleased to work with you and to present this review of the Salt Spring Island Multi Space which outlines accessibility recommendations from mobility, hearing, learning, sensory, cognitive and sight perspectives. We are so encouraged that Salt Spring Island is truly activating on their intention to create meaningful and accessible experiences for the community members of all ages, abilities and disabilities.

We continue to applaud the District and your efforts in working towards universal design and accessibility for all.

If there are any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out! We are here to help.

Thank you again,



Marco & Karin Pasqua

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