

ITEM	7
MANAGER'S REPORT NO.	15
COUNCIL MEETING	Mar. 8/76

PLANNING DEPARTMENT
MARCH 4, 1976

TO: MUNICIPAL MANAGER
FROM: DIRECTOR OF PLANNING
SUBJECT: HOUSING FOR THE HANDICAPPED

On January 12, 1976, Council received a report on the matter of Handicapped Civilians and Burnaby 200 submitted by the Building Department in response to a letter from Mary Knox, President of the Social Planning and Review Council of British Columbia. The following recommendations were adopted:

1. THAT a copy of the Chief Building Inspector's report be sent to the Greater Vancouver Regional District with a request that the District's Housing Committee be made aware of the extent of the provision for the physically handicapped within the current Provincial Building Regulations, and that any departure thought to be desirable from those Regulations be pursued by the Committee with the Associate Committee of the National Building Code in Ottawa; and
2. THAT a copy of this report be sent to Mary Knox.

Council on January 12, 1976 also adopted the following resolution concerning the subject matter:

"That the Planning Department have information material consistent with the desires of the Social Planning and Review Council for presentation to developers when making applications and to indicate that this Council is sympathetic to the concepts as set forth by the Social Planning and Review Council and that a report showing the type of information proposed be submitted to Council prior to release to developers and other interested parties."

The Planning Department subsequently contacted the Social Planning and Review Council with the view towards obtaining the most relevant and up-to-date information on the subject of the handicapped so that the information material requested by Council would represent a fair view of the subject. It appears this request for information has resulted in the further representation to Council by SPARC in the letter of February 25, 1976.

The attached report represents the information material requested by Council which would be made available to developers and other interested parties. The information material represents a general discussion of the subject matter. Detailed specifications are found in the publications referred to.

Recommendation

It is recommended THAT Council give approval to the distribution of the attached information material on Housing the Handicapped to developers and other interested parties by the Planning Department.


A. L. Parr,
DIRECTOR OF PLANNING.

KI:cm

Attach.

HOUSING THE HANDICAPPED

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Information to assist applicants of Rezoning and Preliminary Plan Approvals in accommodating the Handicapped in Housing Developments in the Municipality

1.0 BACKGROUND

On January 16, 1976 Council adopted a resolution requesting that information material consistent with the desires of the Social Planning and Review Council be made available to developers when making development applications and indicating that the Council is sympathetic to the concepts as set forth by the Social Planning and Review Council.

2.0 THE HANDICAPPED - GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The following information material is based on the Report of the Committee on Architectural Barriers for the Social Planning and Review Council of British Columbia.

2.1 Introduction

Because of the advances made by medical science a great many handicapped people are now able to survive the initial trauma of injury and disease and have a reasonable life expectancy. New treatment skills and improvements in drug therapy have been able to control many of the complications which at one time afflicted the elderly and the infirm, and new techniques in rehabilitation have made it possible for them to leave hospitals and institutions and return to the community to lead relatively normal lives.

Our handicapped citizens, which include those who are handicapped by disease and trauma as well as the aged, are therefore using public and private buildings to a steadily increasing degree, and it is imperative that as many buildings as possible in British Columbia be so designed that they can be used easily by them. The mere thought of negotiating a wheelchair up the monumental flight of steps that appear to have been almost a prestige symbol for some types of Victorian buildings will show how needs have changed and how public thinking has advanced in this vital area of public convenience.

A good deal of public money and effort is spent within rehabilitation centres so that those who are permanently disabled will learn how to cope with their problems, become independent in terms of self-care and undertake vocational training which will again enable them to earn a living. Rehabilitation efforts however are often thwarted because architectural barriers prevent handicapped people from attending school, finding employment or sharing in the resources that the community has to offer.

There has been growing concern about this problem from an economic as well as a humanitarian aspect. It seems only fair that public buildings along the other types of buildings should be accessible to all citizens, including those who are handicapped.

General acceptance is required by both the public and private sector for the elimination of architectural barriers as much as possible in all types of structures used by large numbers of citizens and in particular in a reasonable proportion of available new housing units.

Designers, architects and engineers should familiarize themselves with the available information on the elimination of architectural barriers to accommodate the handicapped. Two publications of particular use are Building Standards for the Handicapped 1975, Supplement No. 5, National Building Code which is incorporated in the Provincial Building Code, and Housing the Handicapped, Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

2.2 The Number Involved

The number of people affected by architectural barriers is sufficient to warrant taking action. The National Research Council in developing the standards and specifications which would make buildings accessible estimated that one in every seven Canadians would be directly affected to some extent. This means that in the Province of British Columbia approximately 308,000 people or more are in some way restricted in mobility because of architectural barriers.

2.3 Who is Affected

The people most seriously affected by architectural barriers are those confined to wheelchairs, but the problem does concern a much greater segment of the population. A flight of stairs will stop not only the person in a wheelchair, but the child in braces or using crutches, those with arthritis or serious heart conditions, or the senior citizen unable to exert the amount of energy required. A study of the problem has classified those affected by architectural barriers as follows:

1. People who are confined to wheelchairs regardless of the cause.
2. People with semi-ambulatory disabilities - this includes amputees, the cerebral palsied and those with arthritis, pulmonary and cardiac disabilities.
3. People with sight disabilities - those people who are totally blind or whose sight is impaired to the extent that travelling in public areas may be hazardous.
4. People who have faulty co-ordination due to brain injury, spinal injury and peripheral nerve injury.
5. People who, because of old age, have significantly reduced mobility and impaired co-ordination.
6. People who do not have a permanent disability but through injury or disease may be temporarily handicapped.
7. People who are deaf or hard of hearing.

It should be noted that the problem concerns not only those with a permanent disability but people who through injury or disease may be temporarily handicapped. And of course it affects more than the person who is handicapped - for indirectly, it also affects the members of the family or others who will be required to assist him in his day to day life.

Experience has shown that wherever architectural adaptations have been made to accommodate handicapped people the able-bodied have also found them advantageous. Accessibility is a problem for everybody, not just the handicapped.

2.4 The Problems

The most common problems are:

1. Steps, curbs and sidewalks which are steep and narrow.
2. Doors that are too narrow, revolve or are hard to open.
3. Elevators that are inaccessible because of their size or design or because they do not descend to the entrance level.
4. Lack of accessibility and accommodations for wheelchairs in public gathering places.
5. Too narrow aisles in cafeterias, restaurants, libraries, auditoriums, and other public areas.
6. Too narrow public toilet stalls and telephone booths.
7. Too high telephones, drinking fountains, light switches, fire alarms.
8. Lack of parking spaces for the handicapped.
9. Lack of grab bars where necessary.

To architects, planning to eliminate these obstacles need not present any special problems particularly if they have been clearly identified at the time when the basic building programme is being established. To handicapped people, however, such obstacles are problems because they prevent them from entering buildings and transacting their business in an independent manner.

2.5 What it will Cost

The cost of implementing the specifications contained in BUILDING STANDARDS FOR THE HANDICAPPED has been studied by both architects and builders, and opinion is that such costs are negligible.

What should be noted in considering the building cost implications is the cost to the community from a social, general economic (employment, availability of housing choices) and welfare cost point of view of not implementing such provisions.

2.6 Symbol of Accessibility to Buildings

The insignia shown below was adopted in 1969 by the International Society for the Rehabilitation of the Disabled as a symbol to be used to indicate buildings which are accessible and usable by the handicapped and aged.

As it is desirable to have a common, world-wide symbol, the use of this insignia is recommended by the Committee on Building Standards for the Handicapped of the National Research Council of Canada.



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3.0 HOUSING THE HANDICAPPED: 1974 - CMHC

Housing the Handicapped, a publication of Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation, is primarily based upon Supplement No. 5 to the National Building Code of Canada and provides valuable supplementary information relating to the design of apartment buildings, residential building, the dwelling unit, and detached houses. This publication can be obtained from the CMHC Vancouver Branch Office at 2286 West 12th Avenue, Vancouver.

The following is an appropriate extract on basic design principles.

Regardless of the type of disability, certain principles should be adopted in designing accommodation for handicapped persons. The criteria to cover most physical disabilities are:

1. Everything should be operable with one hand. The second hand may be needed to maintain balance, or it may not be functional.
2. All rooms in the building or dwelling should be readily accessible. Ramps should be provided instead of steps and staircases. There should be no door sills and entrances should be wide enough to permit passage of a wheelchair.
3. Space should be allowed inside the dwelling to permit lateral transfer of the disabled person from the wheelchair to the toilet, bathtub, bed and other furniture.
4. The need to bend down and reach up should be reduced. Loss of balance is a common hazard among the disabled and constant physical stability is necessary for many. A person's vertical reach from a wheelchair is limited and frequent stooping and stretching may be physically exhausting.
5. Cupboard doors and drawers should be designed to permit access to storage by the wheelchair user.
6. Storage should be provided to accommodate a wheelchair when it is not in use.
7. All potential sources of injury should be eliminated. There should be no sharp corners, slippery floors, unprotected hot surfaces or tightly sprung door closers.
8. The dwelling should require minimum maintenance. Many disabled persons are unable to perform all the necessary household tasks and they may be financially unable to purchase housekeeping assistance.
9. Communication with the outside world should be direct and unobstructed. Access routes to the street, to the parking lot and to other homes should be free of stairs, steps and similar barriers.

4.0 SUMMARY

Developers are encouraged to consider and to accommodate as much as possible the needs of the handicapped in all types and qualities of housing developments - from subsidized housing to expensive higher income housing, from ground oriented family accommodation to high rise apartments, and both rental and condominium developments.

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If further information is desired on any aspect of the accommodation of the handicapped, we would refer the interested developer or consultant to the:

Social Planning and Review
Council of British Columbia
2210 West 12th Avenue
Vancouver, B.C.
V6K 2N6

Telephone: 736-4367
736-6621

KI: cm
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