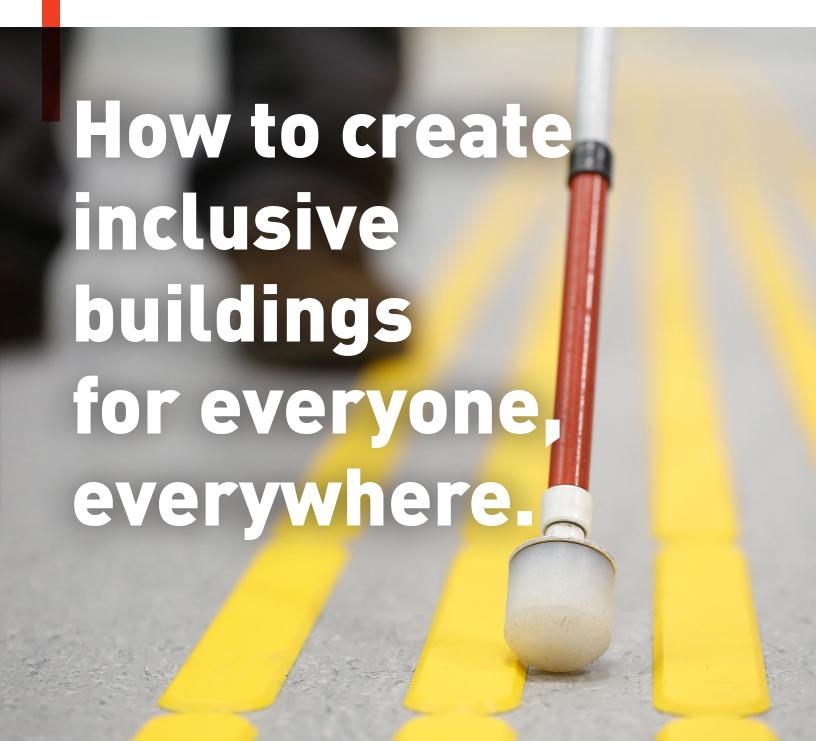


BOMA Canada

2021 Accessibility Guide



BOMA Accessibility Guide

We are proud to present this accessibility guide—a resource to help building owners and managers be inclusive of people with varying temporary and permanent disabilities, and ensure their buildings are sustainable for our aging population.

Dear Friends.

In a year that has arguably been more challenging than any other in memory, it's inspiring to see how people and communities have banded together to look out for each other, including people with physical disabilities.

As businesses, schools and organizations plan for safe reopening — which may include limiting entry and exit points, face masks that obscure the ability to lip read, and limiting washroom access — it's important to ensure the needs of the approximately 1 in 5 Canadian adults who identify as having a disability remain top of mind. Existing barriers in the built environment have already kept them from fully participating in our workplaces, homes, and communities, so it's as important as ever that we continue to identify and remove these barriers.

Building owners and managers are in a unique position to transform the built environment so it can best serve the needs of everyone. To this end, BOMA Canada and the Rick Hansen Foundation have created this updated the Accessibility Guide. Accessibility can be easily misunderstood, and it can be a challenge to determine where exactly it should be factored into a site's plans — so we've tailored this guide to address the questions and specific needs of those in the commercial real estate industry.

Who should read this?

This guide is primarily intended for building owners and managers of commercial real

estate, and for anyone interested in how commercial buildings can be made more accessible to meet the needs of Canadians of all abilities. We believe that anyone who works in the industry should be concerned with accessibility and will find this guide valuable.

How should this guide be used?

This guide is intended as an introduction to understanding the importance of accessibility, its relevance to the work you do, and how it can be incorporated into any site. It is not all-encompassing, and should be supplemented with further reading and adherence to specific standards with the help of professionals.

We hope that you find this Accessibility Guide useful, and that it can act as a roadmap on your journey to creating more accessible and inclusive spaces that benefit everyone.

Sincerely,



Benjamin ShinewaldPresident & CEO *BOMA Canada*



Rick HansenFounder
Rick Hansen Foundation





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BOMA Canada sincerely regrets any errors or omissions in the list above, and thanks all our volunteers and contributors for their support.

Canadians Consumers and Accessibility



The Angus Reid Institute polled 1,800 Canadians in a public opinion survey on disability & accessibility.

The new data shows that accessibility is both a source of future anxiety and a significant consideration for Canadian consumers today.

Canadians care about access





2/3

are concerned about future mobility challenges



53%

want Canada-wide standards for universal access



70%

say new buildings should be universally accessible

Source: Accessibility a source of future anxiety and significant consideration for Canadian consumers today, Angus Reid Institute, Jan 2019 View full report on www.rickhansen.com/reports.

Why is Accessibility Important?

There is a growing need to ensure increased access as the number of people with disabilities continues to rise. Existing building codes vary widely by province, and while buildings may have certain accessible features, overall, they generally fall short of the actual needs of people with challenges related to vision, hearing, and mobility. Looking at the building from a user experience perspective ensures that it can accommodate everyone—parents with strollers, older adults and seniors, and people with temporary and permanent disabilities—and is inclusive of people's needs across their lifespan.

Accessibility is Good for Business

Recent research from the Conference Board of Canada¹ shows that by 2030:

- Real spending by Canadians with disabilities related to mobility, vision, and hearing will rise from 14 to 21% of the total consumer market.
- Improvements to workplace access would allow 550,000 Canadians with disabilities to work more, increasing GDP by \$16.8 billion.
- The increase in labour availability would lift the income of people with disabilities by more than \$13.5 billion.

Simply put, accessibility means more people can access your business, whether they're customers, clients, tenants, employees, or members of the community. No building or site is truly accessible—or sustainable—if it doesn't take into consideration the wide range of needs of its users.

How do you, as a building owner or manager, ensure your buildings are truly accessible? One of the first steps is to look at Meaningful Access.

¹ Source: The Business Case to Build Physically Accessible Environments, *Conference Board of Canada, 2018*



24%

of Canadians have a mobility, vision or hearing disability or challenge



47%

have a relationship with someone who has a physical disability or challenge

Accessibility influences consumers



30%

consider accessibility when deciding which business to visit (that's 9 million adults!)



21%

would support a Certified Accessible business more often

Building to RHF Accessibility Certification

A Cost Comparison Feasibility Study January 2020



Build for everyone, everywhere — without increasing costs

HCMA Architecture + Design (HCMA) conducted a feasibility study on behalf of the Rick Hansen Foundation. The study evaluates a detailed cost comparison of Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification™ (RHFAC), Canada's 2015 National Building Code (NBC), and the 2018 Ontario Building Code (OBC). The findings will help advocate for greater accessibility – to the benefit of all.

Improved access for new builds at minimal cost



1%

The average increase in construction cost to achieve RHFAC Gold* compared to National or Ontario building code.



0.4%

The average increase in construction cost to achieve RHFAC Gold* for an office building compared to National or Ontario building code.



The cost for new builds to achieve RHF Accessibility Certified* when thoughtful planning and design are applied.

Building to code won't achieve RHF Accessibility Certification



35%

The RHFAC Rating Score a building would achieve if built to National Building Code.



42%

The RHFAC Rating Score a building would achieve if built to Ontario Building Code.

^{*}Buildings can achieve 'RHF Accessibility Certified' or 'RHF Accessibility Certified Gold' levels by scoring at least 60 per cent or 80 per cent respectively on the RHFAC Rating Survey.



Source: Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification Cost Comparison Feasibility Study, HCMA, January 2020. Read the full report at: www.rickhansen.com/reports.

What is Meaningful Access?

Meaningful Access is building design that meets the real accessibility needs of all users, regardless of their physical ability. It recognizes that the accessibility of any given site needs to be judged on the basis of the entire user experience, rather than by simply evaluating its physical access features. For instance, a public washroom with grab bars is of little use if it's located at the top of a set of stairs that many people would not be able to climb.

"A building with meaningful access has a few distinctive traits. These traits are not the nuts and bolts of how steep your ramp should be. Instead, they are the outcome, they are what you achieve when all of your accessible features come together. The whole is greater than the sum of its parts."

 Brad McCannell, Vice President Access & Inclusion, Rick Hansen Foundation

Meaningful access differs from the traditional approach to setting the level of accessibility for a given site, which often relies on minimum requirements, such as building code. This codecompliant approach may meet the letter of the law, but not the spirit of meaningful access. Code focuses narrowly on access features for specific areas and for a small, defined group of people with disabilities. For example, a building may have a few features for wheelchair

users, but no features to assist individuals with vision or hearing disabilities. As a result, a building's design can frequently make life difficult for many of its intended users. A planned meaningful access strategy creates a built environment that anticipates the needs of all of its users and meets those user's needs as equals.

When accessibility is considered from the perspective of the people using the space, and not just out of obligation, the site transforms into a place where everyone is equal and can use it with dignity. This is the true meaning behind meaningful access.

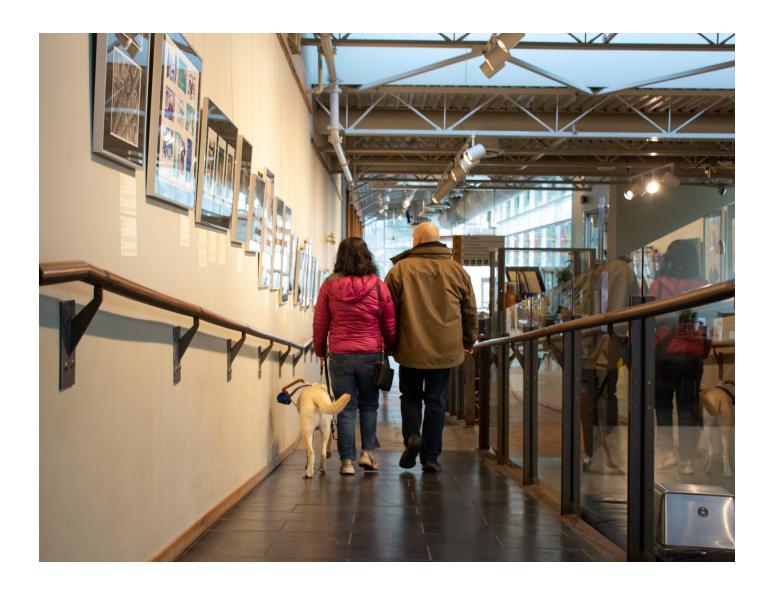
After understanding the value of creating meaningful access, the next step is to look at how to achieve this in your buildings and sites. Universal Design is an approach to design that offers a holistic perspective, creating real and meaningful access for all users, no matter their level of physical ability.



What is Universal Design?

According to the Centre for Excellence in Universal Design, Universal Design (sometimes also called inclusive design or barrier-free design) is the design and structure of an environment so that it can be understood, accessed, and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age or ability.

Universal Design helps achieve Meaningful Access because it is for everyone, including people with permanent or temporary disabilities or illness, older adults and seniors, and parents pushing strollers. Universal Design is inclusive of people's needs across their lifespan.



The Basic Principles of Universal Design

The original concept of Universal Design was created by architect and industrial designer, and wheelchair user, Ronald Mace.

In 1997, Ronald led a working group of architects, product designers, engineers, and environmental design researchers, to create the **7 Principles of Universal Design** to help guide the design process of environments, products and communications. Here's a summary of the principles.

- **Principle 1: Equitable Use.** The design is useful to people with diverse physical and cognitive abilities.
- Principle 2: Flexibility in Use. The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.
- Principle 3: Simple and Intuitive Use. The design is easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language skills, or cognitive level.
- Principle 4: Perceptible Information. The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities.
- Principle 5: Tolerance for Error. The design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.
- Principle 6: Low Physical Effort. The design can be used efficiently and comfortably and with a minimum of fatigue.
- Principle 7: Size and Space for Approach and Use. Appropriate size and space is provided for approach, reach, manipulation, and use regardless of user's body size, posture, or mobility.

"The effect of Universal Design is to expand current design parameters to be inclusive of a broader range of users, regardless of their age or size or those who have any particular physical, sensory, mental health, or intellectual ability or disability."

- Jenny Blome, Manager of Accessibility
Services, Rick Hansen Foundation

Building owners and managers have relied on building codes to determine a basic level of accessibility, but there hasn't been a set of standards to measure meaningful accessibility. So how do you determine if your site can sustain and support all users? And if you determine that it can't, where do you find the solutions?

Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification™

Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility
CertificationTM (RHFAC) is a rating system
that measures the accessibility of the built
environment for existing and pre-construction
sites and promotes increased access through
the adoption of Universal Design principles. It
also helps guide a property towards meeting
meaningful accessibility. Whether you are a
property owner, building or facilities manager,
architect or engineer, RHFAC will give you a real
snapshot of your building's current level of access
and a roadmap on where and how to improve.

RHFAC is the first program of its kind to:

- Measure the level of meaningful access, based on the experience of people with varying disabilities affecting their mobility, vision, and hearing;
- Train individuals who are authorized to conduct ratings through an RHFAC Professional designation; and



 Recognize and celebrate a building's level of accessibility through formal certification as 'RHF Accessibility Certified' or 'RHF Accessibility Certified Gold.'

Getting your site rated will prepare your organization for Canada's changing demographics and recently announced federal accessibility legislation. Any building owner choosing to have their site rated will receive a scorecard and rating summary outlining areas of potential improvement to help guide them improve the accessibility of their site. The scorecard is not made public unless the building owner chooses to have the venue listed

on the online RHFAC Registry hosted by CSA Group. For organizations that want to showcase their commitment to access and inspire others, e-labels, window decals and plaques are also available.

Getting rated will position your organization as a leader in building a sustainable Canada that is accessible for all.

To learn more visit www.RickHansen.com/RHFAC



BOMA BEST™ now Rewards RHFAC with Innovation Points

BOMA Canada is proud to show its support for RHFAC by including a new question on the achievement of an RHF Accessibility Certification in the BOMA BEST Sustainable Buildings assessment, Canada's leading environmental certification program for existing buildings.

The new question, located in the "Comfort" section of the assessment, rewards buildings with bonus points if they are currently RHF Accessibility Certified (10 points) or RHF Accessibility Certified Gold (14 points).



The new question came into effect on April 23, 2019 for the following property types:

- Office
- Light Industrial
- Universal
- Open Air Retail
- Enclosed Shopping Centre

Accessibility Tips

RHFAC breaks down the built environment into eight key areas: vehicular access; exterior approach and entrance; interior circulation; interior services and environment; sanitary facilities; wayfinding and signage; emergency systems; and additional uses of space.

It also recognizes how the journey of the user crosses from the public realm, to landlord and tenant controlled spaces. Therefore, RHFAC certification can be tailored for different perspectives and uses. It can be delivered across a general element of the building, such as the entrance, through to full access into a tenant space, and into the user work environment.

Here are just a couple questions building owners and managers should be asking themselves in each area:



Vehicular Access

Approaching the Site (Includes parking, passenger zone and public transit)

- Is there a suitable number of clearly marked designated parking spaces on a level surface that is close to the main entrance reserved for people with disabilities?
- Is there a drop-off/pick-up zone with appropriate markings, a level, no-slip surface, and seating?

Exterior Approach & Entrance

Approaching the Building and Entrance (Includes pathways, ramps, stairs and entrance)

- Do the pathways leading to the building have level, firm, and slip-resistant ground surfaces and is there an easily identified accessible route (e.g., level, low slope route or ramp) where there are stairs at level changes?
- Is the entrance step-free and the door wide enough for people using mobility aids/devices and service animals?

Interior Circulation

Navigating inside the Building (Includes doors, corridors, hallways, stairs and elevators)

- If the building has more than one floor, is there an elevator that provides access to all floors above or below grade?
- Does the elevator include Braille and tactile features on cab operating buttons, audio floor announcements and handrails?

Interior Services and Environment

Using Facilities inside the Building (Includes lobby, reception, waiting areas, service

counters, area acoustics and lighting)

- Are reception and service counters equipped with assistive listening technologies to ensure clear communication for people with hearing disabilities?
- Do reception or service counters provide universal height counters for people to use in a seated position?

Sanitary Facilities

Using Sanitary Facilities (Includes washrooms and showers)

- Is at least one stall in each washroom designed for people who use a wheelchair or is a universal washroom provided?
- Are there easy to operate washroom accessories mounted at an accessible height for people using mobility devices?

Wayfinding and Signage

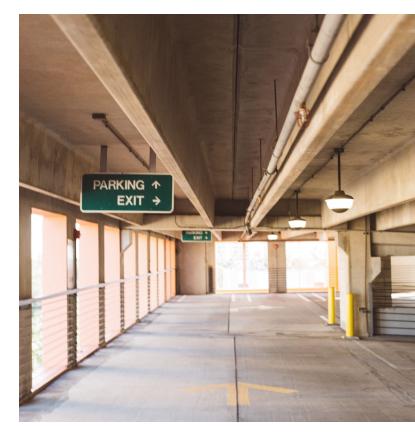
Locating Facilities and Amenities (Includes general and room signage, directories and communications)

- Is the information provided on signs in large text, high colour contrast with its background, and in Braille and raised characters?
- Are there different techniques used to help people navigate the building, such as the use of different colours, flooring textures, and landmarks?

Emergency Systems

Exiting the Building Safely (Includes emergencies, fire alarms and evacuation procedures)

• Are there fire/smoke protected areas of



refuge or an emergency evacuation chair on floor levels that do not have an accessible emergency exit at grade for people unable to use exit stairs?

 Are there visual fire alarms installed throughout the building to notify people who are deaf or hard of hearing of emergency situations?

Additional Use of Space

Using Specific Spaces in the Building (Includes workstations in offices, cafeterias and retail outlets)

- Are there adjustable height desks and chairs provided at office workstations?
- Are there wide access aisles and turnaround points provided in retail stores for people using mobility devices to navigate around the store?



Case Study: Marine Gateway, Vancouver, BC

Marine Gateway is a mixed-use development in South Vancouver offering transit-oriented retail, office, and residential services and spaces. The development is only 3 years old, and while it is up to building code, Triovest property manager Laura Malley wanted to make sure it could support a diversity of people for years to come. To determine the strengths and weaknesses from an accessibility perspective, Malley registered to have the site rated and enlisted the help of an RHFAC Professional, Hans Uli Egger.

Following the rating, Marine Gateway was awarded RHF Accessibility Certified Gold, the highest rating in the program, for its many accessible features such as good vehicular access, escalators and moving walkways, and signage and wayfinding. More important than receiving accolades for what was working well, were the recommendations Egger provided, with clear tips on how to improve.

A unique benefit to getting rated is learning to see your property from the point-of-view of someone with a disability. Malley said this new perspective gave her greater clarity of the difficulties people with disabilities can have navigating the built environment. Egger helped deepen Malley's knowledge of Marine Gateway's common spaces by guiding her through every potential barrier or hazard. This is vital when it comes to accident prevention. Identifying and removing these barriers greatly reduces the chances that a person with a disability will encounter an issue in your building.

One of the residents of Marine Gateway's residential towers has a vision disability and

with Egger's recommendation, Malley is investigating a way to embed tactile signals in the plaza's stone floor to indicate there will be a change in the terrain—much like the bumps in the middle of a road that tell drivers they are moving into the next lane. Not only will implementing this feature help ensure the resident doesn't injure themselves, it also signals to prospective residents that it is a safe and welcoming place. It is impossible to know the situation of every person who is interested in your building, but being accessible means you can appeal to a wider range of people, and are therefore likely to minimize vacancy rates.

The same applies to the retail spaces at Marine Gateway. The needs of each individual is going to vary, but greater accessibility allows more people to access and support the businesses—not only those with permanent or temporary disabilities, but parents with strollers and seniors too.

Because the rating process also acted as an educational experience, Malley says she truly learned the value once the entire rating was completed. "Once you've been through it, you get the value. The professional alone was worth the price of admission. Anything that can help your building be a little bit better is well worth the money."



Case Study: Accessibility in the Workplace

In June 2018, the headquarters for the Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Ottawa moved to a new building managed by BOMA member Colonnade Bridgeport. One of their priorities with the new space was ensuring its accessibility. The new office was built with accessibility in mind, but the team, including Vice President of Operations and Program Implementation Stacey Roy, knew it was important to really understand its level of accessibility. Working with RHFAC Professional Jenny Blome, the Chamber of Commerce office undertook an RHFAC rating to measure its level of meaningful access.

Accessibility is a crucial component of a successful workplace, says Roy: "It's the opportunities—not just in servicing your clients and making your organization more accessible, but also allowing all people to have employment opportunities."

Accessible workplaces are vital to business owners and managers as they can attract a wider pool of qualified employees. There are currently about 550,000 people with disabilities in Canada who know they could find meaningful employment if barriers were removed.

Your business can have a major advantage over competitors if it removes barriers. A recent report¹ shows there is a significant financial benefit to inclusivity. Companies that excelled in disability employment and inclusion had, on average, 28 percent higher revenue and twice as likely to outperform their peers in terms of total shareholder returns.

After receiving their scorecard outlining the areas where they performed well and what



areas can be strengthened, the Chamber created an action plan to implement the suggested improvements.

One of the immediate changes they made was implementing automatic door openers. Features like this benefit everyone, particularly one of their employees who uses a walker and cane for mobility assistance.

Another feature in the Chamber offices is white noise. "As an individual with a hearing impairment ...this not only lessens the static within my hearing aids, but also blocks out my tinnitus symptoms. These accessibility measures have improved my focus and allowed me to work better with my team, which has ultimately improved my workplace confidence as well," says Communications and Marketing Officer, Alita Fabiano.

As part of a network of over 450 chambers of commerce and boards of trade, it is important that their offices can accommodate everyone, now and for years to come. Being accessible ensures they can do just that.

"I am fortunate to work for the Canadian Chamber, an organization that acknowledges the value of an inclusive environment and is leading the way with a barrier-free workplace that has earned Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification. Everyone wins when people with disabilities are given the resources they need to succeed," says Fabiano.

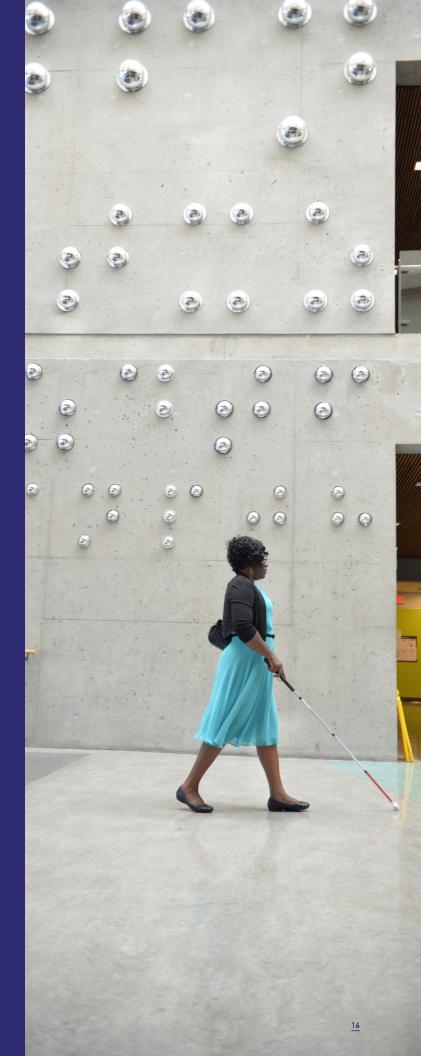
Advancing Accessibility in your Building: Your Next Steps

To discover your building's current level of accessibility, find a designated RHFAC Professional on the RHFAC Professional Directory at www.rickhansen.com/RHFAC-professional-directory to start the rating and certification process. Following a rating, you will recieve a detailed Scorecard and roadmap for increasing access.

The Rick Hansen Foundation is pleased to offer BOMA Members a special 10% discount on RHFAC Registry fees. Register at https://rhfac.csaregistries.ca/ with discount code: BOMA2020.

For more information, email: access@rickhansen.com or visit https://www.rickhansen.com/become-accessible/rating-certification to download the RHFAC Guide to Certification.

Accessibility is key to ensuring your building is able to sustain and continually serve the people who it was made for. When everyone has access, we all win.





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Ce rapport est disponible en français.



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