



Accessibility Report

VIFF Centre

April 2022

Thank you

for choosing Spectrum Ability

We are delighted to present this accessibility report, which outlines your venue's access from mobility, hearing and sight perspectives.

This report focuses on:

- current accessibility successes
- current accessibility challenges
- recommendations on improvements

We also offer RHFAC assessments, for industry-level feedback on your accessibility – for details, ask us about **RHFAC assessments!**

As always, this report is packaged with general accessibility tips – you can apply these tips to any building you choose.

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

Thank you again,

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Intro and disclaimer

Assessment personnel

This assessment was conducted by Arnold Cheng on the 11th of April 2022. All findings and recommendations are based on what was witnessed on the day of the site visit, and do not reflect any changes made since that visit.*

Assessment scope

The VIFF Centre is located in the Yaletown neighbourhood of Vancouver. The scope of the assessment encompasses parking, exterior pathways, main entrances, pathways from entrances to the office space, theatres, lobbies, meeting rooms, kitchens, washrooms, and emergency exits. The scope does not apply to any portions that are not relevant to VIFF Centre (such as the neighbouring strata complex).

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.

Spectrum Ability 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.

** exceptions apply for COVID-19 related features/arrangements, provided that they are temporary and will be reverted to their post-pandemic state*

Areas of success

These are the features that are currently working well. When making any upgrades or improvements, it would be ideal to preserve as many of these as possible.



Exterior approach and entrance

- **Entrance doors**
There is clear space for approach, with no obstacles or steps.



Interior circulation

- **Paths of travel**
All paths of travel are wide enough for two mobility devices to pass comfortably.
- **Corridors and hallways**
Corridors have contrast between the ground and walls.



Interior services and environment

- **Reception desk**
There is currently a lowered counter for ticketing and information.
- **Acoustic features**
There are sound damping features in the main foyer and office areas.

Areas of short- and long-term improvements

These are the features that are currently posing accessibility barriers.

While most of the issues will be within your control, there are often some issues that may involve external parties such as landlords, building managers, or municipal government services. This serves as written documentation of the accessibility assessment’s findings.

Please note that some recommendations may require consulting structural engineers, code compliance experts, fire safety specialists, and so forth. While we can provide input based on accessibility, it is the client’s responsibility to ensure that any changes are done in accordance with local regulations or bylaws.

Symbols

- | | |
|--|---|
|  Vehicular access |  Sanitary facilities |
|  Exterior approach/entrance |  Wayfinding and signage |
|  Interior circulation |  Emergency systems |
|  Interior services/environment |  Additional use of space |

Short-term improvements

(listed by order of **importance**)



- **Reception desk – signage**

Currently, the reception and information desk does not have signage indicating its function. This is a barrier for those who have low vision, or unfamiliar with the building.

Consider adding signage indicating the reception desk's role.



- **Glazed walls and doors**

Currently, glazed walls and doors lack any contrasted markings or stripes. This is a hazard and barrier for people with low vision, who may not detect the glass or have trouble differentiating between the doors and walls.

Consider installing two contrasted strips at two levels on glazed doors and (where appropriate) walls.



Some glazed walls already have window panels, which can act as a contrasted strip. In that case, only one strip is necessary.



- **Blade signage**

Currently, there are entrances to the theatres that are reachable via long hallways, without directional signage. This is a barrier for people with low vision or stamina issues, who may benefit from knowing for certain where the theatre entrances are located.

Consider blade signage that direct users to the theatre entrances.



For areas with accessible seating, a wheelchair symbol might be useful.



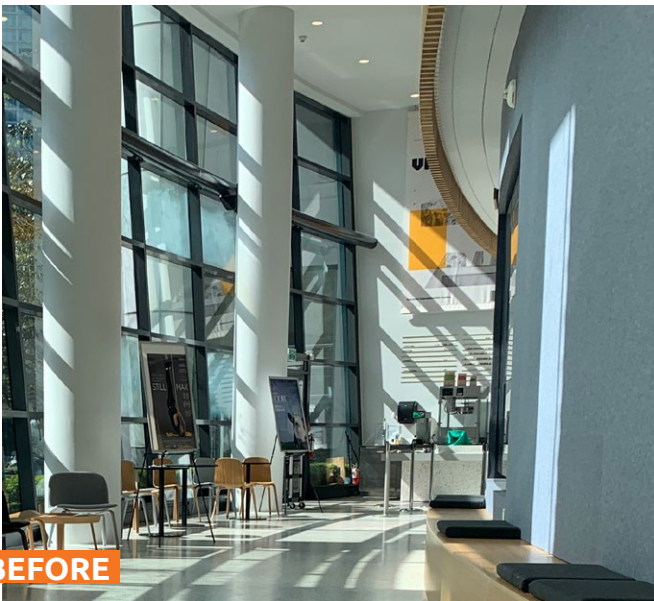
BEFORE



AFTER

Left: Glazed doors do not have markings or strips to indicate their presence.

Right: Two colour-contrasted strips on the glazed doors. The higher strip is at a height of around 1500 mm AFF, with the lower strip around 900 mm AFF.



BEFORE



AFTER

Left: Theatre entrances are not visible from the corridor.

Right: Blade signage indicating where to go to reach the theatre door.



- **Queuing guides**

Currently for roped areas with queuing guides, only one height is available without colour contrast. This is a barrier for people with low vision, who may not be able to identify or detect the queuing guides with blind canes.

Consider queuing guides with colour contrast, available at two levels (lower ribbon at 685 mm AFF) to allow for blind cane detectability.*



- **Accessible theatre seating – Studio Theatre**

Currently, the accessible seating at the Studio Theatre downstairs does not have signage indicating its function. This can lead guests without disabilities to use the space for storage and guests with disabilities may have trouble identifying the space.

Consider adding signage to accessible seating, as well as increase heights of backboards to accommodate power wheelchairs (so any wheelchair parts or backpacks will not intrude into the guest behind them).



- **Interior stairs – nosing and riser strips**

Currently, some interior stairs do not have colour contrasted nosing strips. This is a hazard for people with low vision, who may have trouble differentiating between each step.

Consider adding colour contrasted nosing and riser strips at each step.

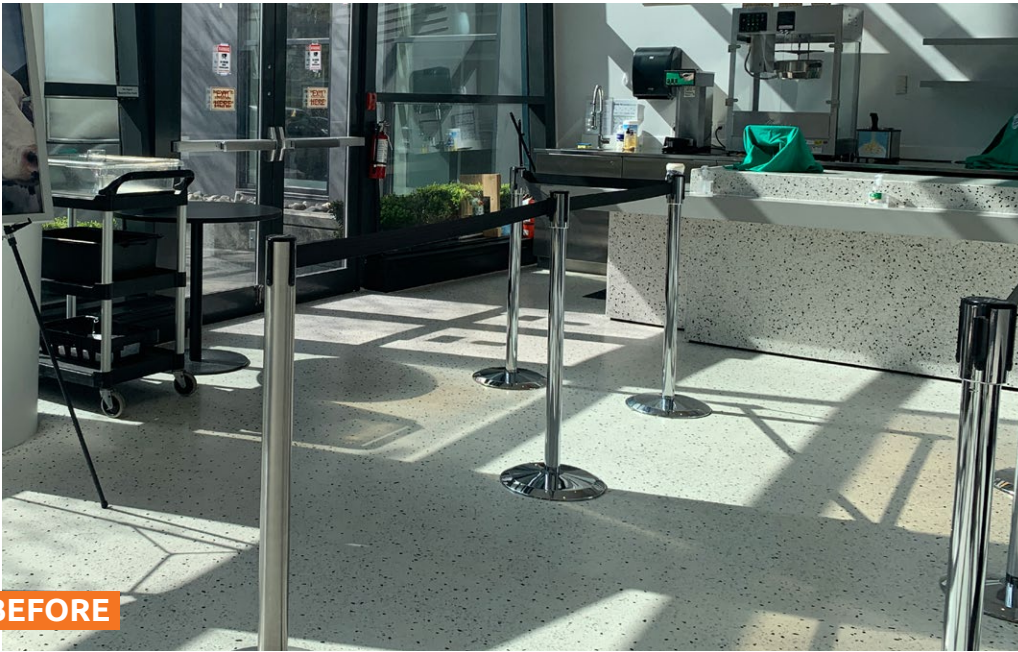


- **Interior doors – colour contrast**

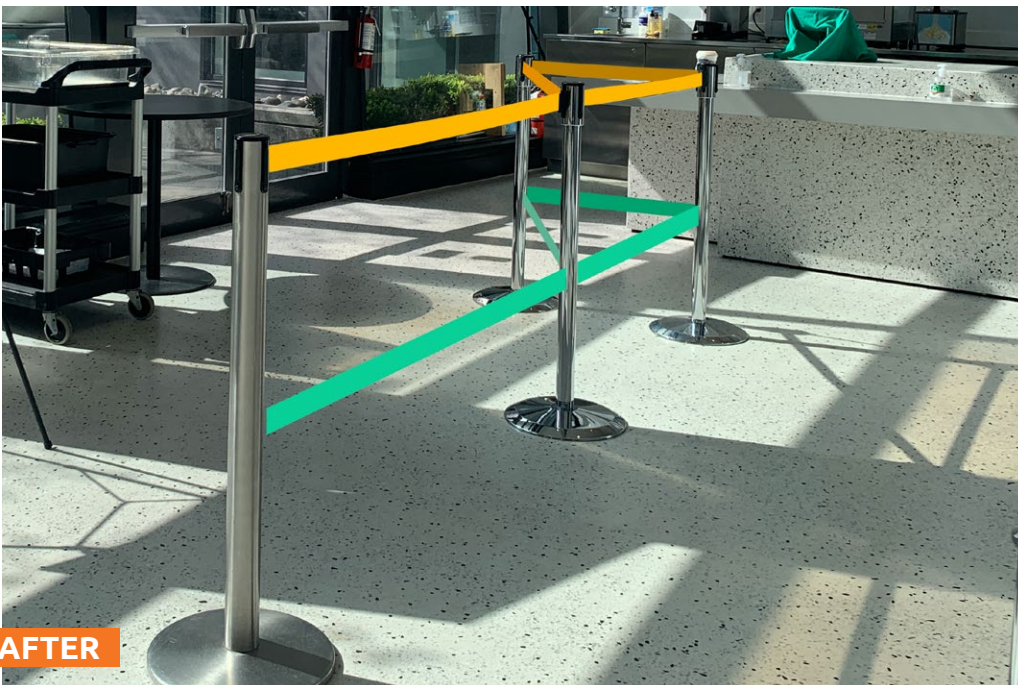
Currently, interior doors (including to the theatre) are not colour contrasted. This is a barrier for people with low vision, who may have trouble identifying the theatre entrance.

Consider using a contrasted colour for interior doors.

***AFF** = Above Finished Floor



BEFORE



AFTER

Top: Queueing guides are not colour-contrasted and at one height.

Bottom: Two colour-contrasted ribbons at two heights. The bottom ribbon's height is 685 mm AFF or lower, to allow for blind cane accessibility.



BEFORE



AFTER

Top: Interior stairs without colour-contrasted nosing and riser strips.

Bottom: Colour-contrasted nosing and riser strips, visible while looking down and up the stairs.



BEFORE



AFTER

Top: Room signage and entrance door are not colour-contrasted. Power-operated door button is only at one height.

Bottom: Room signage is colour-contrasted, with raised lettering and braille. Entrance door is colour-contrasted with an “automatic door” warning sticker. Power-operated door button is now a vertical actuator button.



Top: For the Studio Theatre, there is no colour contrasted or power-operated door.
Bottom: Theatre door is colour-contrasted with an “automatic door” warning sticker. There is a vertical actuator button for a power-operated door.



BEFORE



AFTER

Top: Accessible seating area is not marked and has a low back, allowing wheelchair backrests or backpacks to encroach into the row behind.

Bottom: Accessible seating area is clearly marked with high-contrast signage and a higher back board.



- **Interior doors – signage**

Currently, interior doors (including to the theatre) may not have signage with colour contrast or braille/raised lettering. This is a barrier for people with low vision, who may have trouble identifying the theatre.

Consider colour contrasted signage with braille, raised lettering, and sans-serif typeface.



Any room signage should be placed on the wall adjacent to the door latch, to prevent braille-readers from being hit by an opening door.



- **Signage – destinations list**

Currently, there is a list of destinations at each floor near the stairs, with a slightly different colour indicating which floor the user is at. This is a barrier for those who have low vision or colour blindness.

Consider a circle around the floor number to indicate the current floor.



- **Washrooms – mirrors and fixtures (universal washroom)**

Currently, mirror and fixtures in the universal washroom are slightly too high or out of reach from a sitting position. This is a barrier for wheelchair users, as well as anyone who is shorter.

Consider lowering the mirror to the sink height, and fixtures (such as the towel and soap dispenser) to 950-1100 mm AFF.



Typically the height should be 1200 mm AFF or lower; however, in the universal washroom, clear space is impacted by the sink. Thus, a lower height is needed.



- **Emergency exit – doors (signage)**

Currently, emergency exit signage on the door are not highly visible from afar. This can be a hazard for people with low vision or situations where visibility is limited.

Consider signage with icons and large high-contrast sans-serif typeface, indicating areas of refuge where applicable.



BEFORE



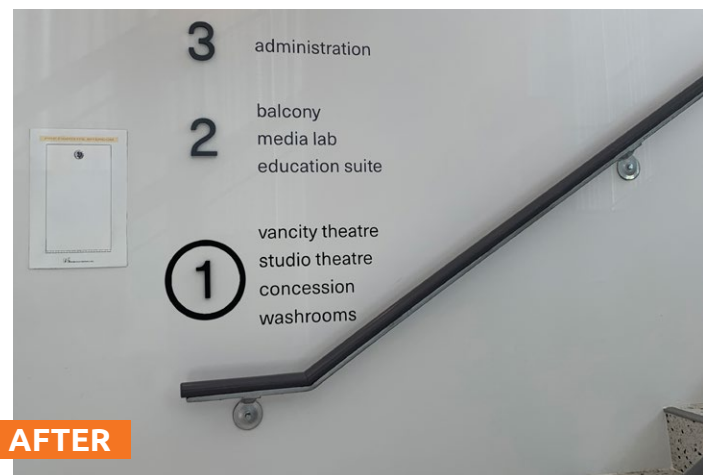
AFTER

Left: Washroom signage lacks braille or raised lettering. Door is not power-operated or colour-contrasted. Directional signage may be hard to see from afar.

Right: Washroom signage has braille and raised lettering, with colour contrast. Door is power-operated via vertical actuator button, and colour-contrasted. Additional icons are added to directional signage, enhancing visibility from afar.



BEFORE



AFTER

Left: Current floor is not indicated by a colour-contrasted visual cue.

Right: Current floor is indicated by a circle around the floor number.



BEFORE



AFTER

Left: Washroom mirror is too high for wheelchair users. Towel and soap dispensers are too far or too high.

Right: Washroom mirror is lowered. Towel and soap dispensers are also lowered; the towel dispenser's height is around 1100 mm AFF and soap dispenser is around 950 mm AFF. (Heights are lower than usual due to clear space being obstructed by the sink.)



- **Emergency stairwell – areas of refuge**

Currently, areas of refuge are not clearly marked. This can lead the space to be cluttered and used for storage, which is a hazard for emergency situations where the space is needed.

Consider clearly marking the area of refuge with signage.



Also consider investing in an evacuation chair (such as those made by EVAC-CHAIR), in order to assist those who have trouble negotiating stairs.



- **Area of refuge – office level**

Currently, the pathways to the area of refuge and the area of refuge itself are cluttered with storage items. This is a hazard for emergency situations where users need to shelter in place.

Consider signage and procedures to ensure that all pathways to the area of refuge are clear and that the area of refuge itself is clear as well.



- **Washroom signage – ground level**

Currently, washrooms on the ground level are not always visible due to wall corners or users facing the wrong direction.

Consider blade signage indicating the washrooms, hanging from the ceiling and visible from afar and both directions.



- **Offices – workspaces**

Currently, workspaces on the office level do not always have height adjustable tables or task lighting. Such workspaces would benefit those who prefer to stand while working and those who need additional lighting.

Consider height adjustable tables and offer task lighting as an option.



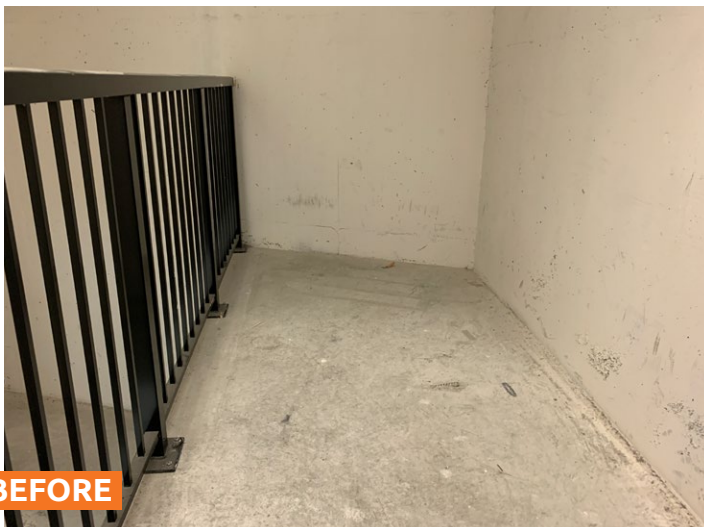
BEFORE



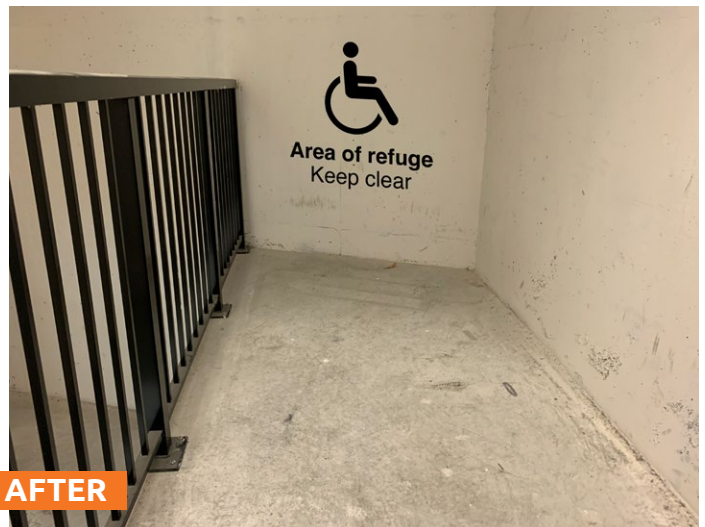
AFTER

Left: Emergency exit doors have small text on signage, without icons. The door also has a high and narrow vision panel.

Right: Signage has icons and increased font. Vision panels now extend to the bottom of the door to enhance visibility.



BEFORE



AFTER

Left: Area of refuge lacks signage, which can prevent the space being used for storage.

Right: Area of refuge signage with both text and icons.

Long-term improvements

(listed by order of **importance**)



- **Entrance door – power-operated buttons (clear space)**

Currently at the front entrance, the power-operated door button's clear space is partially obstructed by bushes. This is a barrier for wheelchair users, who may not be able to approach the button adequately or lean forward enough to reach it (possible for users with chest straps).

Consider making the button face northwards. (It currently faces eastwards.)



- **Entrance door – power-operated buttons (heights)**

Currently at the front entrance, the power-operated door button is available at one height. This is a barrier for people with upper limb differences or amputations, as well as wheelchair users with limited hand and arm use.

Consider adding a vertical actuator button, or buttons at two levels (1100-1200 mm AFF and 200 mm AFF).



- **Box office desk**

Currently, the box office window is only available at one height. This is a barrier for people in wheelchairs or who are shorter.

Consider adding a lower counter option, with a bottom height / knee clearance of 685 mm AFF and 200 mm deep.



- **Reception desk – knee clearance**

Currently, the reception and information desk does not have knee clearance underneath. This is a barrier for those who use wheelchairs, who may have to approach the desk to fill out forms, make payments, etc.

Consider adding knee clearance underneath for the public, at a height of 685 mm AFF and depth of 200 mm.



BEFORE



AFTER

Top: Glazed entrance doors and walls lack markings or strips on the glass. Power-operated door button is at one height and clear space is obstructed by shrubbery.

Bottom: Doors have colour-contrasted strips at two heights; walls have one strip, as there is a window pane that acts like a strip. Power-operated doors are activated via vertical actuator button, which has clear space in front.

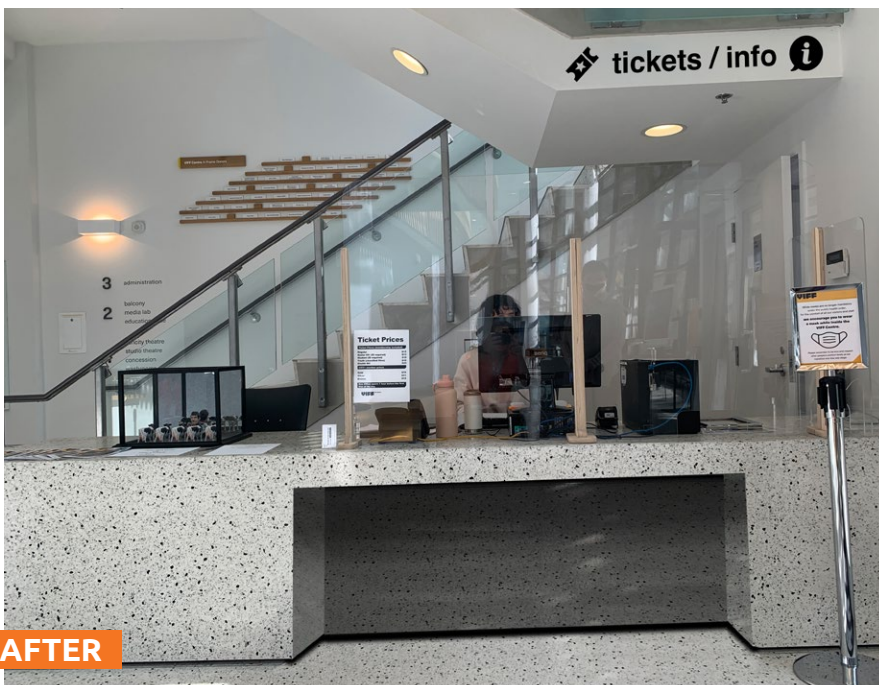


Top: Box office counter is available at only one height.

Bottom: Box office with a lower height for wheelchair users and those who are shorter. There should be a knee clearance height of 685 mm AFF.



BEFORE



AFTER

Top: Information desk has no knee clearance for approach by wheelchair users. There is no signage.

Bottom: There is knee clearance underneath (685 mm AFF high and 200 mm deep). There is signage above the desk, with icons, colour contrast, and sans-serif typeface.



- **Interior stairs – tactile indicators**

Currently for some (but not all) interior staircases, there are no tactile indicators at the top. This is a hazard for people with low vision, who may need a warning that the pathway is about to turn into stairs.

Consider adding tactile attention indicators to the top of the stairs.



For interior (indoor) stairs only, tactile strips are acceptable. They are not best practice but are adequate if costs are an issue. (Colour contrast is still required.)



If there is a landing without any other possible destination, tactile indicators are recommended but not required.



- **Interior doors – power operation**

Currently, interior doors (including to the theatre) do not have power-operated controls. This is a barrier for people with mobility issues or upper limb differences or amputations, who may need to enter or return to the theatre without assistance.

Consider installing a power-operated door, with a vertical actuator control button to accommodate people with both lower and upper limb differences or impairments.



- **Theatre seating – general accessible area**

Currently, the accessible seating area has a railing that obstructs wheelchair users' sight lines and is not clearly marked.

Consider lowering the rail in front of the seating area and clear signage that indicates the accessible seating area.



- **Theatre seating – ledge**

Currently, there is no ledge for users to set down phones, snacks, etc. This is a barrier for wheelchair users, who may not be able to balance such items on their laps or cannot use the floor space due to sizes of wheelchairs.

Consider adding a ledge to the accessible seating area.



Top: Emergency stairwells without tactile attention indicators.

Bottom left: Tactile attention indicators, with truncated domes and colour contrast. This is best practice.

Bottom right: Tactile slots with colour contrast. This is not best practice but still meets minimums for interior (indoor) stairs.



Top: Tactile indicators without colour contrast.

Bottom: Tactile indicators with colour contrasted strips, as a supplemental warning feature for people with low vision.



- **Emergency exit – doors (vision panels)**

Currently, vision panels on emergency exit doors are high. This is a hazard for those who are shorter, who may open the door into another person.

Consider installing a door with two vision panels, spanning from eye-level to bottom.



- **Education Suite – sound damping**

Currently, there are some echoes inside the Education Suite. This is a barrier for people who are Deaf or hard-of-hearing, or have hearing aids.

Consider adding sound-damping features (such as foam walls, foam ceiling items/tiles, wooden-slotted walls, etc.). Also consider a hearing loop system for hearing aid users.



- **Washrooms – office level**

Currently, the gender-neutral washrooms on the office level do not have accessible features.

Consider grab bars next to the toilet (at a height of 750-850 mm AFF) and open-cannister toilet paper dispensers within reach from a sitting position. Consider lowering paper towel dispensers and hand dryers to 1100 mm AFF.



Shelves may need to be wall-mounted to increase floor space for maneuver.



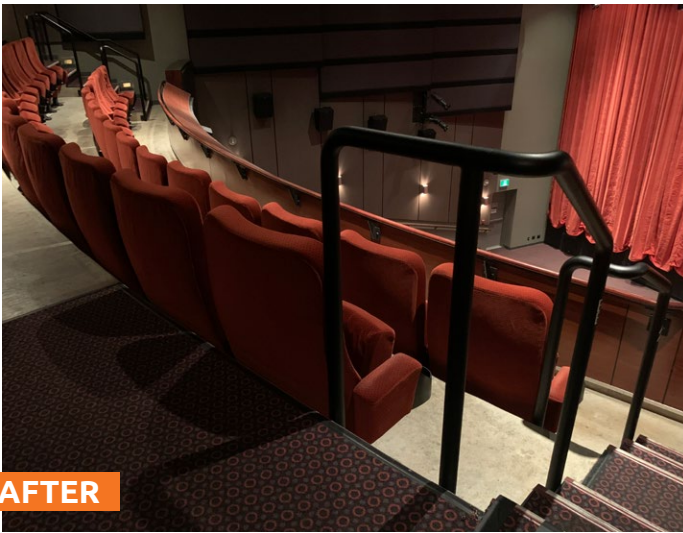
If possible, ensure that the counters do not have sharp corners.



- **Kitchens – office level**

Currently, the kitchen's sink is not at an accessible height or have knee clearance underneath. This is a barrier for wheelchair or walker users, who need to roll underneath to prevent body-twisting to use the sink.

Consider a sink and counter height of 860 mm AFF, with knee clearance underneath of 685 mm AFF and 200 mm deep.



Top: Upper balcony does not have accessible seating options.

Bottom: Possible accessible seating, with a railing low enough not to obstruct the line of sight and a ledge to store phones, snacks, or other items. (The same idea may be applicable to the existing accessible seating below, if possible.)



- **Vancity Theatre's front of room – interior ramp**

Currently, there is an interior ramp to the front of Vancity Theatre with a broken and obstructed railing. This is a barrier and hazard for people with mobility issues or devices.

Consider repairing the railing (maintaining a height of 860-920 mm AFF) and keeping the ramp clear.



- **Vancity Theatre's front of room – signage**

Currently, there is no signage indicating the pathway from the elevator to the front of Vancity Theatre.

Consider adding high-contrast directional signage in sans-serif typeface.



- **Showers (basement level)**

Currently, the shower and washroom at the basement level is being used as storage space. This is a barrier for those who wish to bike to work (including handcycles) and need an end-of-trip facility.

Consider cleaning up the shower and washroom facility. Also consider a fold-down shower chair that is self-draining (with slots on the seat) and within reach from the shower controls.

Additional considerations



- **Carpeting**

Currently, there are some carpeted areas with a circular pattern. This can feel busy and disorienting to people with vertigo issues, as well as interfere with navigation for those with low vision.

Consider carpeting with a solid colour, with fewer patterns.



- **Hearing loops for reception area**

Currently, there are no assistive hearing features for the reception desk. This may be a barrier for people with hearing aids who cannot filter out background noise effectively.

Consider installing hearing loops at the reception desk.



Did you know?

One of the first transportation hubs to offer wheelchair-friendly access was Grand Central Station in New York City – but the architects did not have wheelchairs in mind.

Instead, the ramps all over the station were designed for wheeled luggage, which was getting popular at the time. Years later when wheelchair access became a more common feature, Grand Central was already good to go!¹

This is one of the earliest examples of future-proofed universal design that accommodates as many people as possible – even if it is completely coincidental.

¹ Nonko, Emily. "How Wheelchair Accessibility Ramped Up." *The Atlantic: Technology*, The Atlantic, 22 June 2017, www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2017/06/ramps-disability-activism/531273/.

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