



this way...

...to an accessible community

The accessible community is a dream. And a goal. It is a place where everyone, regardless of ability, shares equal access to the key elements of life in a community: work, play, access, participation.

Moreover, we *need* communities to be accessible, not only in a physical sense, but also in a broader social sense. With an evermore diverse and ageing population, B.C. communities should acknowledge the goals and heed the imperatives of accessibility, social inclusion, and universal design. Although a general level of awareness exists about the needs of people with mobility impairments—certainly more so now than even fifteen years ago—much more remains that can be done for people with a wider range of disabilities, from sensory impairments to mental health issues.

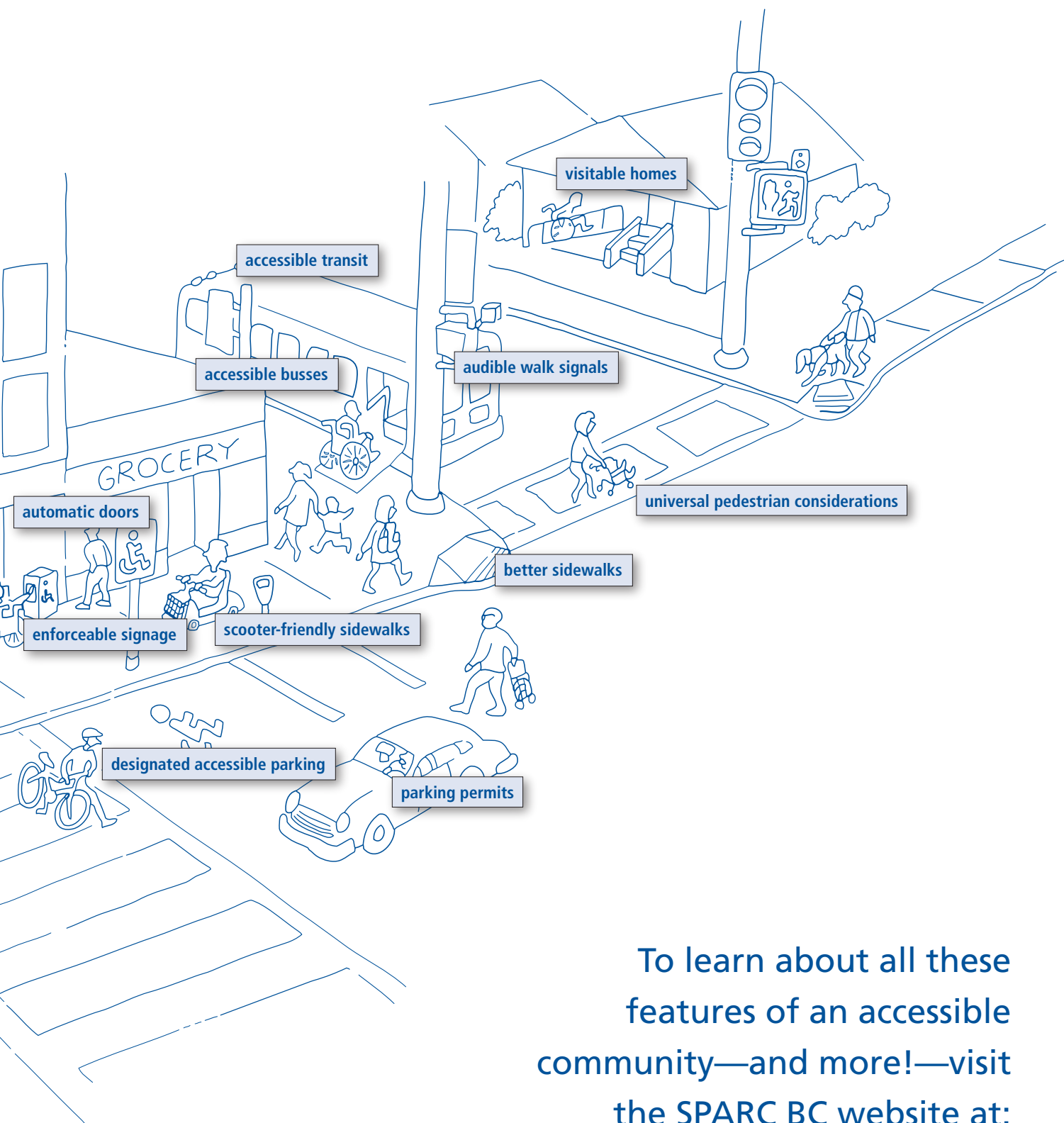
At SPARC BC, we follow the Social Model of Disability. In other words, we believe that it is not individual impairment which leads to disability, but the barriers created by society which leads to people being “disabled.” We do not believe that people with impairments should be “cured;” rather, we believe that society needs to change. Hence, it is society’s responsibility to remove these barriers in order to create accessible communities.

For instance, although curb cuts and ramps are becoming common-place, the Internet and digital communications in general remain widely inaccessible to people who rely on screen readers and other assistive technologies. Employment opportunities for many people with disabilities are also limited, due to misconceptions about the “limitations” of hiring staff with disabilities and the cost of accommodating them. Sometimes accommodations can be as simple as flexible work hours to deal with chronic health conditions, or other staff-members being more disability-aware, or making minor adaptations to work stations. In the spirit of better, healthier, more inclusive communities, we encourage everyone not only to strive to be more accessible, but to celebrate the benefits of an inclusive and responsive community.

On the back page of this insert we feature a recent guide to accessibility-related events that you or an organization in your community can undertake. We aimed to develop activities that embrace the broader aspects of accessibility, some that we hope make people question their perceptions and definitions of disability, others where we aspired educate and build enthusiasm around accessibility.

the accessible community has...

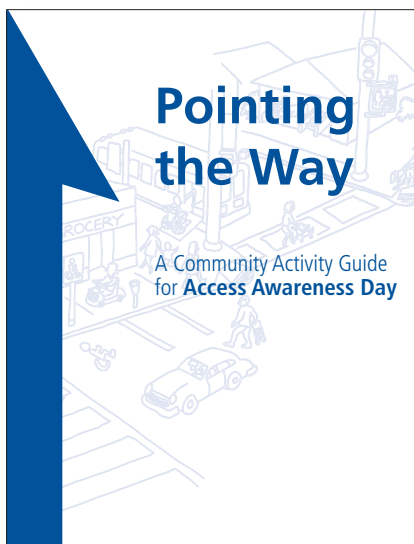




To learn about all these features of an accessible community—and more!—visit the SPARC BC website at: [<www.sparc.bc.ca/aad_2007>](http://www.sparc.bc.ca/aad_2007)

pointing the way

promoting accessibility in your community



There are many ways individuals and organizations can promote accessibility and inclusion in their communities. *Pointing the Way*, SPARC BC's recently published guide to accessibility activities, has lots of great ideas and resources.

DISABILITY ARTS FESTIVAL

An arts festival that focuses on the talents of artists with disabilities can help to change people's attitudes. It can also build a sense of community among people with disabilities, as well as contribute to a more diverse and inclusive arts sector.

DISABILITY SIMULATION EXERCISE

Disability simulations, if thoughtfully and carefully planned, can have significant outcomes in raising aware-

ness about living with a disability. They can lead to greater understanding of the societal barriers that people with disabilities face.

POPCORN AND A MOVIE

There is, perhaps, no more effective a vehicle for examining the human condition film. Many films have examined disability, from the barriers that society constructs around people with disabilities, to focusing on how disability affects a person.

ACCESSIBILITY AUDIT

Find out how accessible your organization really is. An accessibility audit can be conducted on websites, communications materials, buildings, and any type of public space. From checking email, to catching a bus, it is easy for people without disabilities to forget how inaccessible many of our daily routines actually are.

SHOWCASE ACCESSIBILITY ORGANIZATIONS

Many accessibility organizations do valuable and important work, but operate in relative obscurity. Members of the community are often unaware of the organizations that exist, their mandates, and the issues that they focus on.

INCLUSION IN SPORTS AND RECREATION

Access to recreation, including organized sports is an important part of the accessible community. Recreation builds mental, emotional, and physical strength and serves as a social gathering place for community.

PRESENTATIONS ON ACCESSIBILITY BY SPARC BC

SPARC BC makes presentations to organizations and local councils about community accessibility. This is part of our ongoing campaign to raise awareness about the links between accessibility and social inclusion, as well as to give some practical steps that can be taken by civic organizations to involve people with disabilities.

ACCESSIBILITY AWARDS CEREMONY

Accessibility recognition and awards and ceremonies can be a great opportunity to celebrate the contributions of individuals and institutions who strive to increase accessibility. The awards can recognize initiatives that have removed both physical and social barriers to people with disabilities.

To request a copy of *Pointing the Way*, please get in touch with us at (604) 718-7733 or info@sparc.bc.ca. You can also download the document from www.sparc.bc.ca/pointing_the_way