EXPLORING THE ACCESSIBILITY KNOWLEDGE OF PROFESSIONAL PLANNERS

by

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ABSTRACT

Accessibility in the built environment is a critical issue that needs to be addressed to ensure people of all ages and abilities can partake in daily life. A lack of accessibility understanding among urban planners is a part of the issue of poor accessibility in the built environment. This lack of understanding largely stems from disability not being well understood by city-building professionals[1], an overall poor planning and design process as it relates to accessibility, and a gap in understanding who city-building professionals serve through their work. Interviews with accessibility professionals highlighted that accessibility policy and land use policy are misaligned in terms of enforcing accessibility goals and that there is an opportunity for urban planning to take a larger role in advancing accessibility. Accessibility professionals emphasized that ignoring accessibility contributes to exclusionary environments that segregate Persons With Disabilities (PWD) from the built environment and, in turn, their communities. Recommendations include centring disabled perspectives in the planning processes, working alongside dedicated accessibility consultants, and, in particular, increasing accessibility education to establish baseline accessibility knowledge for urban planners.

An article on accessibility and urban planning in the Ontario context

Key words: accessibility, disability, urban planning, built environment, social model of disability

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[1] City-building professionals include the designers, planners and architects that shape the built environment.

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1.0 Introduction

The term 'accessibility' is complicated as it can have multiple definitions as it relates to the built environment. Accessibility has been defined as the relative nearness or proximity of a place or person to all other places and people (Batty, 2009). Or the proximity to activities, measured by travel time (Proffitt et al., 2017). The term is also synonymous with transportation and the ease of access to various modes. For the purposes of this paper, accessibility is defined as the design of products, devices, services, or environments for people who experience disability (Accessibility Services Canada, 2022). The varying understanding of the concept of accessibility may be a small contributing factor that is part of a larger issue — overall, urban planners have limited knowledge on how to improve the accessibility of the built environment for PWD.

Although planners acknowledge that accessibility is important, there is a clear gap in the practical accessibility knowledge of the planning profession. Professionals' lack of knowledge and awareness of disability is a significant barrier in inhibiting the development of appropriate design to meet the needs of disabled people (Terashima & Clark 2021; Imrie & Hall, 2001). Accessibility has also been under-investigated by planners for too long, on average the major planning journals have published 1.7 papers that focus on PWD per decade (Terashima & Clark, 2021). The limited interaction of city-building professionals and PWD has created environments that exclude PWD. This can be seen in confusing and overwhelming building layouts, segregated entrances for PWD, and exterior environments with poor walkability — these are very limited examples of a larger overall problem of exclusionary built environments. Hamraie (2013) discusses the concept of parti, the grammar of architecture, the experience of space, the expression of the layout, style, and theme evident in the design of a space. A building only accessible by stairs produces parti, communicating exclusion to those unable to access the space. There is a need for city-building professionals to better understand that the parti of inaccessible spaces can communicate to PWD that the overall built environment is not designed for them. Further, inaccessible built environments violate the Ontario Human Rights Code, which states that

persons with disabilities have the right to be free from discrimination in employment, services, goods, facilities, and housing. Goodley (2011) discusses the concept of professions allied to the community (PAC). "PAC refers to services and professionals that respond to and are led by the aspirations of disabled people and their representative organizations" (p. 173). The PAC role places control and choice in the hands of disabled people in terms of the services and assistance they require. There is a need for city-building professionals to be PACs for the disability community, to move away from designing built environments that are exclusionary, and to craft new accessibility goals, objectives, plans, and initiatives. For Ontario to come anywhere near the goal of being accessible by 2025, urban planners will need to take a larger role. The intersection of planning and accessibility has many moving parts — It is important to understand the elements that make up a typical planner's understanding of accessibility to move the practice forward.

2.0 Literature Review

After an exploration of literature on accessibility as it relates to the built environment, three main themes were identified to sort the concepts from reviewed literature: (1) Disability not being well understood; (2) Poor planning and design processes; and (3) the creation of inaccessible built environments.

2.1 Disability — Not Well Understood

Reviewed literature largely indicated that the term 'disability' and the differential needs of persons with disabilities are not well understood by planners, and a better understanding of issues related to PWD is urgent for city planners (Terashima & Clark 2021; Imrie & Hall 2001; Biglieri, 2018; Lewis, 2009; Hall & Wilton, 2016). For example, planners know little about cognitive disability (Biglieri, 2018). The need to facilitate better living conditions has been recognized by planners but how planning practice can play an effective role in addressing the needs of PWD has been unclear (Terashima & Clark, 2021). Changing planners' perceptions of the needs of PWD may be the first step in building a more inclusive city (Biglieri, 2018).

2.1.1 Defining disability

Professionals' lack of knowledge and awareness of disability is a significant barrier in inhibiting the development of appropriate design to meet the needs of disabled people (Terashima & Clark 2021; Imrie & Hall, 2001). The term disability itself is chaotic in the sense that it suggests that there is a commonality of types and experiences which can be defined with the term 'disabled' (Imrie & Hall, 2001). The term disabled can also be interchanged with other words such as impaired. Goodley's (2011) analysis of disability studies discusses the nature of impairment, which is defined as functional limitation. Impairment is understood by the words we use to describe it, and words/discord are given meaning through social construct. In this way, impairment is made by institutions that sort people based on the concept of what makes them impaired (Goodley, 2011). Terashima & Clark (2021) posit a definition of disability in their analysis of disability perspectives in

planning. Persons with disabilities are defined as persons who face barriers conducting their lives due to a mismatch of their physical and mental functional capacities and organization of the built and social environment. This definition is important as it aligns with the social model of disability. This definition places the fault of inaccessibility in the built environment, not the person with a disability — which is key for any definition of disability or impairment.

2.1.2 Social Model of Disability

The societal understanding of disability has begun to move away from the medical model of disability, where fault is placed at the individual level, to the social model — where disabilities experienced by individuals stem from barriers in one's social and built environment (Goodley, 2011; Terashima & Clark 2021; Biglieri 2018; Staples & Essex, 2016). With this paradigm shift, it can be understood that the way we plan cities can either enable or disable persons with disabilities (Biglieri, 2018). Conceiving the relationship between the built environment and PWD as an issue of accessibility, there is an opportunity for planning scholarship and practice to study how our communities are built in ways that the health, mobility, and wellbeing of PWD (Biglieri, 2018; Staples & Essex, 2016).

Imrie and Hall (2001), along with Goodley (2011), discuss the social model of disability and how socially constructed barriers have disabled people with a perceived impairment. Imrie and Hall also discuss the prevailing assumption of city-building professionals that accessible environments can be provided by recourse to technical design solutions, without a corresponding change to socio-cultural attitudes and practices. This point pushes the social model of disability further by noting that socio-cultural attitudes and practices must be adjusted in tandem with accessible design solutions.

Regarding housing, the development and planning process currently situates the provision of housing suitable for disabled groups within the medical model of disability, where persons with disabilities should be responsible for finding/modifying their own accessible housing. Staples and Essex (2016) discuss shifting to the social model, where accessibility can be improved through more inclusive design incorporated at the construction stage,

making standardized housing more broadly inclusive. However, this would require a substantial transformation of the business model, regulation, and stakeholder communication/collaboration within the planning and development process (Staples & Essex, 2016).

A noted fault discussed in literature regarding the social model of disability, is that the social model largely denies the experience of the human body, insisting that the physical differences and restrictions between humans are entirely socially created (Imrie & Hall, 2001). Imrie and Hall (2001) note that in some cases, the restrictions caused by impairments will remain regardless of social conditions. They also discuss the bio-social perspective as a response, which argues that impairment does not exist in a social vacuum but is socially defined and constructed. Who or what is defined as disabled depends in part on social and political processes seeking to identify and categorize different types of impairment. Bio-social perspectives note that impairment is usually collapsed into a series of general and chaotic categories, such as vision, mobility, and hard of hearing, which do little to reveal the complexities of impairment — essentially, impairment is never fixed or static. From this theory, Imrie & Hall (2001) suggest that city-building professionals' responses to the design need of disabled people must be flexible and adaptable to the myriad of potential bodily interactions within the built environment. Goodley (2011) also critiques the social model, noting that the social model can only explain so much before we need to return to the experiential realities of impairment as objects independent of knowledge (Shakespeare, as cited in Goodley 2011). Goodley (2011) notes that "Impairment is a predicament and can be tragic" (p.28) meaning that it must be acknowledged that some impairments are tragic and go beyond what can be ameliorated by changes to the built environment. Considering this, the social model must remain prominent but with a bio-social perspective that acknowledges the complexities of impairment.

2.1.3 Focus on mobility and physical impairments

A focus on disability as primarily an issue of mobility, ignoring other facets has been identified in previous research (Terashima & Clark, 2021; Imrie & Hall, 2001; Biglieri, 2018;

Eyob et. al, 2021). It was noted that those in city-building professions tend to perpetuate social and attitudinal barriers to the facilitation of disabled people's access by operating with a limited understanding of impairment, typically focused on mobility-related physical disability (Terashima & Clark, 2021; Imrie & Hall, 2001). Imrie & Hall (2001) note that city-building professionals hold the assumption that accessible design for the needs of wheelchair users is sufficient. Imrie & Hall (2001) state that "Wheelchair reductive models of disability dominate professionals' attitudes and responses to the needs of disabled people, yet very few registered disabled people are wheelchair users" (p. 43).

2.1.4 'Perceived' lack of demand

Another assumption held by city-building professionals is that there is insufficient demand expressed by disabled people for an accessible built environment and a lack of evidence for the housing needs of PWD, leading to apprehension about implementing accessibility (Terashima & Clark, 2021; Imrie & Hall, 2001). Due to this apprehension, planners tend to not possess the confidence to impose conditions or obligations or refuse planning applications due to a fear of incurring costs against council at appeal (Terashima & Clark, 2021). A key driver for the lack of demand theory is a lack of good data on disability. Statistics Canada's 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability under-represents disability in Canada, due to reliance on self-reporting, which misses Canadians who need accessibility accommodations but do not identify with having a disability or will not admit on a census form that they do (Kurdi & Abdallah, 2021). Data also does not capture temporary or situational disabilities or those who may find accommodations beneficial (Kurdi & Abdallah, 2021). In their interviews with planners, Staples and Essex (2016) shared the perspective of a planner who noted that it has been known for years that there is a need and a market for inclusive homes; however, there appear to be institutional processes and/or attitudes preventing these inclusive needs from being met. This perspective is confirmed by the presence of countless news stories describing the struggle for Canadians to find suitable accessible housing (Mohamed, 2021; Da Silva, 2020; Storeys, 2021).

2.2 Poor planning + design process

The current state of the design/development process in capitalist nations was noted in literature as a mechanism creating a disconnect between accessibility and the built environment (Imrie & Hall, 2001; Goodley, 2011). As a result, there is less state involvement in addressing accessibility and a rise in private institutions to fill this gap. Due to the limited research on planners and accessibility, reviewed literature leans on allied professions like architecture. It should be noted that architecture (and its associated education and professional standards) is allied but different from the planning profession. Imrie & Hall (2001) suggest that disability generally is not a part of the architecture culture, which tends to focus primarily on aesthetic design. Reviewed literature noted that architects and other professionals are not typically taught about contrasting cognitive capabilities that may require adaptive environments and design solutions (Biglieri, 2018; Imrie & Hall, 2001). Imrie & Hall (2001) suggest that it is professionally myopic and morally irresponsible to teach students to evaluate architectural work in terms of aesthetics, building performance, and cost, without also teaching them to consider whether what they are designing is ecologically intelligent and socially just (Imrie & Hall, 2001). Imrie & Hall (2001) also state that architects have an overwhelming reliance on their own experience in the design process, whereas planning may not suffer from this as much with its history of examining public participation in the planning process and the collaborative cross-disciplinary nature.

Davidoff (1965) has discussed advocacy and pluralism in urban planning, and Arnstein (1969) has discussed citizen participation and its varying degrees. These classical planning theorists have contributed to building a culture of engagement within planning practice. Lewis (2009) provides a key point as it relates to accessibility, noting that designing for the needs of people with impairments simply has not been a significant feature of planning theory and instruction. However, as previously noted, modern planning practice is built on engagement and collaboration, meaning the practice has the capacity to involve PWD and improve. Goodley (2011) notes that the collaborative nature of planning aligns with scholarly examinations of disability studies, which can be viewed as a transdisciplinary

space that breaks boundaries between disciplines and creates in-roads into disciplines that have historically marginalized disabled people (Goodley, 2011).

Regarding the role of developers in the design process, the main concern was managing the risk of their financial investment in new housing developments before returns were secured (Staples & Essex, 2016). Imrie and Hall (2001) discuss the overall procurement process and how the Design and Build approach is the preferred method for developing projects, in which design details are itemized and costed in advance. This implies that significant change would be resisted by contractors after the project commences. The design and build process renders the consultative process irrelevant and potentially estranges disabled people from the design process if they are not considered at the onset of the project (Imrie & Hall, 2001).

2.2.1 Engaging Persons With Disabilities

A lack of engagement with PWD by city-builders was a common thread across reviewed literature (Imrie & Hall, 2001; Staples & Essex, 2016; Terashima & Clark 2021; Goodley, 2011). City-building professionals cannot get information from books, databases, or design criteria alone. City-builders must involve the future users, and the customers of the design to develop a process that is broadly representative, user-responsive, and participatory (Imrie & Hall, 2001). The use of the term 'designers' by Imrie and Hall largely refers to architects, who have significantly less history engaging users, relative to urban planners. Imrie & Hall (2001) note that designers must engage and listen to people who can articulate the needs and responses of people at all stages of life. For example, designers should involve the customers of the design through universal design reviews (Imrie & Hall, 2001). A criticism of engagement noted by Imrie & Hall (2001) comes from architects, who note that access groups tend to have their own agenda and can be narrow in their focus, only looking at their specific disabilities, to the detriment of other user groups (Imrie & Hall, 2001). It is key to ensure that no single user group dominates accessibility conversations. As previously noted, urban planning is built on engagement and there is a duty to define the public interest. There will always be challenges with public participation, Bryson et. al

(2013) note that a key challenge for those undertaking public participation is "ensuring that the appropriate range of interests is engaged in the process, including those normally excluded from decision making" (Bryson et al., 2013, p. 29).

When disabled perspectives are solicited in planning, they tend to be incorporated as an afterthought rather than as an integral element in informing development schemes and planning policies (Terashima & Clark 2021; Imrie & Hall, 2001). An idea to combat this persistent exclusion is the concept of being professionals allied to the community (PAC) raised by Goodley (2011). PAC refers to services and professionals that respond to and are led by the aspirations of disabled people and their representative organizations. The PAC role places control and choice in the hands of disabled people in terms of the services and assistance they require — enabling closer working relationships between professionals and organizations run by disabled people (Goodley, 2011).

2.2.2 Universal Design/Inclusive Design

Universal design seeks to design built environments that will not require future retrofitting or alteration by going beyond legal accessibility requirements (Hamraie, 2013). Universal design and design-for-all are seen as promising theoretical thoughts that propose ways to equalize the opportunities and rights to space for people of all ages and abilities (Terashima & Clark, 2021). However, these models have had little official standing in policy and the decision-making process (Terashima & Clark, 2021). The attainment of inclusive design is dependent on city builders' sensitivity to the development contexts and knowledge of the building needs of people with physical, sensory, and cognitive impairments (Imrie & Hall, 2001). Universal design is seen as a complex process that requires an integrative, team approach to transcend the limitations of any one perspective or professional viewpoint (Imrie & Hall, 2001). Universal design also aims to cater to all within the context of its design solutions. Its proponents claim to be able to accommodate difference and variation by using adjustable and interchangeable design elements and designing spaces that can be easily customized (Imrie & Hall, 2001). Terashima & Clark (2021) note that Urban Design has been more active in the field of barrier-free

environments relative to other fields, including universal design or Design for all approaches.

Other scholars have also raised doubts about universal design solutions (Imrie & Hall, 2001; Haramie, 2013. Imrie & Hall (2001) argue that there are so many different types of sight loss that you cannot create access for all, that universal design is not possible — as there are too many contrasts and types with visual impairment and also depth of vision varies so much. Universal design may be promising much more than is technically available or feasible with its one-size-fits-all approach (Imrie & Hall, 2001; Hamraie, 2013). Hamraie (2013) also notes that universal design is a value-explicit design theory, which relies on designing for a presumed group of typical bodies. Imrie & Hall (2001) note that the needs of special groups must be recognized in a universal design approach, seeking to place building users at the centre of design processes.

2.2.3 Cost of accessibility

Imrie & Hall (2001) note that another predominant assumption from city-building professionals is that the provision of accessible buildings and environments is prohibitively expensive. However, Steinfeld (2005) notes that "Cost is not a significant barrier to accessible design although it is often perceived to be one. Research has shown that the cost of accessibility is generally less than 1% of total construction costs" (p. 3). Ultimately, the argument that finances should trump human access goes against the duty to accommodate disability — a violation of the Ontario Human Rights Code. Furthermore, there is a financial benefit to enhancing accessibility. Improving workplace access for people with disabilities alone would increase Canada's GDP by $16.8 billion by 2030 and allow 550,000 Canadians with disabilities the opportunity to work more (Gibbard et al., 2018).

2.2.4 Lack of Coordination

Another issue within the design process identified in literature is a lack of accessibility coordination across disciplines (Imrie & Hall, 2001; Terashima & Clark, 2021). Imrie & Hall

(2001) discuss that the problem of accessibility cannot be tackled piecemeal but requires a holistic approach, there is a need for architects, engineers, and urban planners to realize that token provision of a few reserved parking lots, ramps, toilets and lifts are insufficient (Imrie & Hall, 2001). Terashima & Clark (2021) note that the efforts to address various needs by PWD have been siloed across multiple different units of government and that planners are in a unique position to coordinate efforts across different units of government.

2.3 Who are we building for?

Built environments have been made inaccessible to a sizeable portion of the population (Imrie & Hall, 2001; Biglieri, 2018; Kurdi & Abdallah, 2021; Terashima & Clark, 2021; McCormick et. al, 2019; Hamraie, 2013). Hamraie (2013) discusses the design of buildings and public spaces as a non-value-neutral and passive act. They note that the design of the built environment actively forms the assumptions that the city-building professionals of these value-laden contexts hold concerning who will (and should) inhabit the world. In short, built environments serve as litmus tests of broader social exclusions (Hamriae, 2013, p. 2).

Staples & Essex (2016) discuss how housing for disabled people is not yet fully addressed in the development process. Housing is primarily driven by speculative and standardized provisions for the mass market. This standardization is for the able-bodied and cognitively unimpaired with little provision for the disabled. (Staples & Essex, 2016). They also note that there is a shortage of appropriate housing for adults with disability, which is projected to worsen with an estimated 21% of households in the USA having at least one resident with a mobility disability. Housing affordability problems are especially severe for people with disabilities and an increase in stock is imperative (McCormick et. al, 2019).

Canada also has an increasingly older and urbanizing population (Biglieri, 2018). A built environment conducive to walkability allows older populations to get more physical activity and interact with their community, which is key for limiting cognitive decline (Biglieri, 2018). The concept of the walkable 15-minute city as it relates to accessibility was also discussed

(McCormick et. al, 2019; Kurdi & Abdallah, 2021). McCormick et. al. (2019) note that a considerable proportion of PWD cannot drive and need to live in walkable spaces rich in transit options.

The concept of aging in place has led to an increase in accessibility literature from planning (Terashima & Clark, 2021). Aging in place is a fundamental concern of universal design, the prioritization of flexible design aims to accommodate people of all ages and abilities, in the context of a home this can accommodate a user through their lifespan (Hamraie, 2013).

The current wave of active transportation and pedestrian-friendly communities is resulting in wide sidewalks, bike lanes, and multi-use paths intended to reduce vehicle traffic in urban areas. While these ideas bring us to greater sustainability, they often fail to acknowledge accessibility (Kurdi & Abdallah, 2021).

McCormick et. al (2019) note that transit-oriented development has cut auto dependence and provides a built form that is more accessible to PWD (McCormick et. al, 2019). Kurdi and Abdallah critique the 15-minute city paradigm, noting that the idea of the 15-minute city does little to account for the needs of the disability community, not considering that many people with disabilities rely on vehicles, the walkability of 15-minute cities must consider accessible paths and space for people with disabilities, as well as safety measures (Kurdi & Abdallah, 2021).

Through the conducted literature review, overarching themes emerged around how city-building professionals have failed to correctly implement accessibility in the built environment. Literature indicated that this stems from disability being not well understood. This starts with the chaotic nature of the term disability and a focus on mobility and physical disability by city-building professionals. The social model of disability was discussed as a welcome departure from the medical model of disability, literature also acknowledged that design interventions may not always be enough to overcome disability. A perceived lack of demand for accessibility was also cited in literature, which is not the case based on limited statistics and an aging Canadian population.

Literature also indicated an overall poor planning and design process for accessibility. This stems from limited engagement of PWD, and a lack of coordination across disciplines in the city-building process. A propensity for city-building professionals to not go beyond minimum level accessibility measures was seen due to excuses like the cost of accessibility implementation being too high. Universal/inclusive design paradigms were cited as ways to design that go beyond minimum standards.

An overall lack of understanding of the audience city-building professionals design for was also seen. Literature broadly discussed how sectors like housing and transportation have not considered the need to design for people of all ages and abilities, ensuring they are accommodated in the built environment.

3.0 Policy Context

This section provides a brief overview of accessibility policy applicable to the province of Ontario.

3.1 Federal Level

Legislation begins at the federal level, with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Canadian Human Rights Act. Section 15 of the Charter states that every individual in Canada – regardless of race, religion, national or ethnic origin, colour, sex, age, or physical or mental disability – is to be considered equal. This means that governments must not discriminate on any of these grounds in its laws or programs (Government of Canada, 2018).

The Canadian Human Rights Act of 1977 was enacted to protect Canadians from discrimination when they are employed or receive services from the federal government, First Nations governments, and private companies regulated by the federal government, such as banks, trucking companies, broadcasting, and telecommunications companies. The Act prohibits discrimination based upon physical or mental disability (Government of Canada, 2018).

The Accessible Canada Act, which came into force on July 11th, 2019, was designed to build on this existing federal policy framework "through a proactive and systemic approach for identifying, removing and preventing barriers to accessibility" (Government of Canada, 2020). The purpose of the Accessible Canada Act is to make Canada barrier-free by January 1, 2040. To accomplish this, the goal is to remove and prevent barriers in federal jurisdiction in the areas of employment, buildings and public spaces, information and communication technologies, the procurement of goods, services, and facilities, the design and delivery of programs and services, and transportation (including airlines, rail, road and marine transport that crosses provincial/international borders).

Table 1: Direct Policy Sections

Federal	*Accessible Canada Act, 2019*	The principles of the ACA are to ensure that: o everyone must be treated with dignity o everyone must have the same opportunity to make for themselves the life they are able and wish to have o everyone must be able to participate fully and equally in society o everyone must have meaningful options and be free to make their own choices, with support if they desire o laws, policies, programs, services, and structures must take into account the ways that different kinds of barriers and discrimination intersect o persons with disabilities must be involved in the development and design of laws, policies, programs, services, and structures, and o accessibility standards and regulations must be made with the goal of achieving the highest level of accessibility (Government of Canada, 2020)
Provincial	*Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*	The AODA was enacted to recognize the history of discrimination against persons with disabilities in Ontario and aims to benefit all Ontarians by: (a) developing, implementing, and enforcing accessibility standards in order to achieve accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities with respect to goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures and premises on or before January 1, 2025; and

		(b) providing for the involvement of persons with disabilities, of the Government of Ontario and of representatives of industries and of various sectors of the economy in the development of the accessibility standards. (Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act)

		The Design of Public Spaces Standard covers:
		   o Recreational trails and beach access routes
		   o Outdoor public eating areas like rest stops or picnic areas
		   o Outdoor play spaces, like playgrounds in provincial parks and local communities
		   o Accessible parking (on and off street)
		   o Outdoor paths of travel, like sidewalks, ramps, stairs, curb ramps, rest areas and accessible pedestrian signals (Thompson, 2019)

Municipal	*City of Toronto Accessibility Design Guidelines, 2021*	The use of the City of Toronto Accessibility Design Guidelines (TADG) is to be included as a mandatory requirement for all new construction, extensive renovations and replacements to all of the City-owned, leased or operated facilities or property assets. All City divisions managing capital construction projects shall ensure compliance with these guidelines during the pre-planning, design, construction documents, preparation, and construction and occupancy phases (The City of Toronto, 2021)

The important facet of the Accessible Canada Act that must be emphasized is that it only applies to organizations under federal responsibility. This means that only federally owned buildings and programs must be made accessible under this Act, which necessarily leaves out much of Canadian society. This is a gap in the stated goal of making Canada barrier-free by January 1, 2040 and acts more as a way to make elements of the built environment that fall under federal jurisdiction barrier-free by January 1, 2040.

There are also accessibility design guidelines that exist at the national level in the form of the Canadian Standards Association B651-18, *Accessible design for the built environment.* Organizations may follow these guidelines when implementing accessibility, but ultimately, they are a volunteer standard, and "CSA Group has no power, nor does it undertake, to enforce compliance with the contents of the standards or other documents it publishes" (CSA Group, 2018).

3.2 Provincial Level

The next applicable pieces of accessibility policy come at the provincial level, starting with the Ontario Human Rights Code (OHRC). The OHRC states that persons with disabilities have the right to be free from discrimination in employment, services, goods, facilities, and housing — similar to the broad overarching accessibility goals in previously outlined federal policy.

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) came into effect on June 13th, 2005 and applies to every person or organization in the public and private sectors of the Province of Ontario, including the Legislative Assembly of Ontario (Accessibility for Ontarians With Disabilities Act).

The AODA works through the development and implementation of standards. The Minister is responsible for establishing and overseeing a process to develop and implement all accessibility standards necessary to achieve the purposes of the Act. Currently, there are five standards governing organizations that offer goods, services, facilities, employ Ontario workers, provide accommodation, own or use a building, and operate a business, grouped together they are the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation. (Thompson, 2020).

- The Information and Communications Standards
- The Employment Standards
- The Transportation Standards
- The Design of Public Spaces Standards

- The Customer Service Standards

Currently, Health Care Standards and Education Standards are in development.

Regarding accessibility in the built environment, the Design of Public Spaces Standard is the most pertinent. It describes ways to make communal spaces more accessible (Thompson, 2020). Refer to Table 1 for the full list of spaces covered.

The *Ontario Building Code* covers rules for the accessibility of most indoor spaces. However, the *Design of Public Spaces Standard* includes standards for service-related elements like service counters, fixed queuing lines, and waiting areas with fixed seating. Finally, the Standard also covers the maintenance and restoration of public spaces.

Compliance with these standards is currently done through periodic accessibility reports. "A person or organization to whom an accessibility standard applies shall file an accessibility report with a director annually or at such other times as the director may specify" (Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act). The AODA also indicates that inspectors shall be appointed to carry out the purposes of the act and may carry out inspections to ensure compliance with regulations.

The issue commonly cited with the AODA is the lack of enforcement of the standards (AODA Alliance, 2018). The AODA Alliance has outlined rampant violations of the Act and cites ineffective provincial enforcement as a consistent problem. This issue arose in interviews as well with an Accessibility Professional stating that the former lieutenant governor Ontario David Onley's review of the AODA was a blistering attack on the ineffectiveness and lack of enforcement. They noted that if you do not enforce the rules then what is the point. (Full findings can be found in Section 5).

As previously mentioned, the Ontario Building Code covers accessibility for the indoor built environment at the provincial level. The Ontario Building Code primarily focuses on

accommodating physical impairment in the built environment, focusing on Barrier-free paths of travel, barrier-free access between floors, accessible designated apartment suites, visual fire safety devices, washrooms, access to pools, and spas and seating in public spaces. A common thread that emerged in interviews with accessibility professionals is that building code can often be seen as enough, but there are gaps. The focus on accommodating physical impairment does little for making the built environment accessible to those with cognitive disabilities. Further discussion on gaps in building code and other accessibility policies will occur in the discussion section.

3.3 Municipal Level

The final level of accessibility-focused policy is at the municipal level. Typically, this comes in the form of *Municipal Accessibility Guidelines*. Not all municipalities have guidelines, and many were introduced around the time of the AODA and have not been updated since. Typically, municipal accessibility guidelines will only be mandatory for city-owned assets. Refer to Table 1 for an example of the scope of municipal accessibility guidelines. Municipal accessibility guidelines can vary across municipalities, but they tend to address design for the interior and exterior environment. Ensuring these standards are applied is largely the responsibility of Accessibility Advisory Committees, who provide city councils advice on eliminating accessibility barriers, ensuring that projects align with city access goals.

3.4 Land Use Planning Policy

Accessibility policy at the federal, provincial, and municipal levels is often separated from the land use planning and development process. Accessibility is a part of the planning framework at various levels but is described very generally. In the *Provincial Policy Statement* (2020), accessibility is distinctly stated, but only once. In Section 1.1, 'Managing and Directing Land Use to Achieve Efficient and Resilient Development and Land Use Patterns,' the only stated goal that addresses accessibility is "improving accessibility for persons with disabilities and older persons by addressing land use barriers which restrict their full participation in society" (Ontario, 2020). Accessibility/disability is only mentioned again in Section 6.0, definitions. Definitions include institutional use and special needs.

In the *Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe* (2020), the concept of accessibility is broad and open to interpretation. For example, a section from the introduction section states that "Residents will have easy access to food, shelter, education, health care, arts and recreation, and information technology. Public services will be co-located in community hubs that are broadly accessible" (Ontario, 2020). In Section 2.2, Policies for Where and How to Grow, accessibility is mentioned by expanding convenient access to an appropriate supply of safe, publicly accessible open spaces, parks trails, and other recreational facilities. This statement aligns with the spaces covered by The Design of Public Spaces Standard, however, accessibility for PWD is not explicitly mentioned anywhere in the policy. The term disability itself is also not mentioned.

Official Plans can vary across municipalities, but consideration of accessibility tends to be very high level. For instance, in the *City of Toronto Official Plan* (Office Consolidation, 2022), Chapter 1, principles for a better Toronto, accessibility is mentioned as ensuring people have equitable access to a range of leisure and recreational opportunities, ensuring people with special needs are supported to live in their communities and making public transit universally accessible. Chapter 2, shaping the city, illustrates the complexity and confusion that can occur with the term accessibility. Accessibility is defined in the chapter as having two components, transportation mobility, and land use proximity. Chapter 3, building a successful city, has more direct accessibility aspirations for PWD. For example, section 3.1.1 of the public realm states that "A key city-building principle is that public buildings, parks, and open spaces should be open and accessible to all members of the public, including people with disabilities" (City of Toronto, 2022). Section 3.1.1 also states that

> All new and altered buildings, transit facilities, and public works meet City and Provincial accessibility standards; and retrofitting over time all existing City-owned buildings that are open to the public and open spaces to make them accessible to users of all ages and abilities and encouraging the owners of private buildings and spaces to do likewise through public education and retrofit programs.

This chapter has the most direct examples of addressing accessibility for PWD. The issue is that when accessibility is mentioned, it is largely empty talk, with no explicit policy directions on disability/accessibility across Official Plans. Zoning bylaw is the tool used to implement the goals and policy directions of the Official Plan. The City of Toronto's Zoning By-law 569-2013 largely only mentions accessible parking spaces and ensuring spaces are accessible by wheelchair. This indicates a lack of enforcement of the accessibility goals in the Official Plan.

In the current accessibility policy and land use policy context for Ontario, there are defined goals to make the built environment accessible but a lack of enforcement behind these goals. Coordinating these policies is also difficult. Accessibility Coordinator roles exist at municipalities to support cities in complying with AODA standards, liaise with accessibility advisory committees, and develop greater awareness of accessibility across city departments. This role could be important to explore as a bridge to the planning profession — limiting the siloed approach to accessibility that currently exists among city-building professionals.

4.0 Methodology

This project fits into Forsyth's (2009) planning culture of 'assessing practice'. The study was designed to understand the key issues of disability and accessibility in planning through three methods:

1.   Literature review of accessibility and city-building professional research[2]

2.   Review of accessibility and land-use planning policies in Ontario

3.   Semi-structured interviews with built environment accessibility experts working in Ontario asking questions about accessibility in the built environment and how it relates to urban planning. Interviews questions can be found in Appendix A.

This information was then used to create a questionnaire to explore the accessibility knowledge of professional planners working in everyday practice to be used in future research.

Interviews were conducted over Zoom for approximately one hour and upon completion, a transcript was generated. Transcripts were then cleaned for errors, and a thematic analysis was then conducted to identify patterns from interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Transcripts were analyzed line by line and coded. Once an entire transcript was thematically coded, related codes were grouped to form the findings section of the report.

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[2] Due to the limited amount of available literature, research on allied design professions like architecture were also used.

5.0 Findings

Following the interviews with Accessibility Professional #1 (hereafter AP1) and Accessibility Professional #2 (hereafter AP2) a number of themes emerged. Between both interviews, several common themes became apparent as well. These include a need for stricter enforcement of accessibility legislation in Ontario, the need for city-building professionals to have more accessibility education, poor implementation of accessibility in projects, the intersectionality of accessibility with existing planning concepts, accessibility building certifications presenting issues, and the need for PWD to be at the centre of accessibility discussions. Each individual theme that emerged in the interview has been grouped below with associated headings.

5.1 Accessibility legislation in Ontario

AP1 provided a review of the history of accessibility legislation in Ontario. They covered the numerous ways accessibility legislation has failed to achieve better accessibility in Ontario and Canada. They noted that if we had updated the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and Human Rights code 40 years ago to acknowledge that we need to accommodate for the fact that people "have a lifetime of changing needs and abilities" we would be in a better place. From discussing the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, AP1 began discussing the changes to Ontario's provincial accessibility legislation.

They also discussed the 2001 Ontario Disabilities Act (ODA), which was a precursor to AODA. It was created because government-funded buildings needed to be accessible. AP1 noted that the conservative government in power at the time wanted to do something with accessibility but did not take full leadership with the ODA. They discussed ways that the ODA could have been better implemented, particularly if grassroots movements had been able to define access and put it into legislation, which would have led to better accessibility in architecture and planning today, but ultimately this did not happen. They then discussed how the AODA emerged out of a need for more robust accessibility legislation.

AP1 noted that the government created a false separation between the built environment standards as separate from Communication + Information; Customer Service and Transportation standards, which all have built environment elements. They discussed how the built environment standard began as an approximately 260-page document with heavy technical requirements but was cut down to 26 pages. By doing so, most of the technical requirements were cut, with "a handful of the cuts making it into the building code." AP1 discussed how the AODA has had many more shortcomings since being enacted. The Act stated that the AODA design of public spaces had to apply when the building opened, but this was not actually enforced by anyone in the government.

They note that if efforts go towards education but money for enforcing accessibility is not being used, it is ineffective legislation. AP1 cited the case of former Lieutenant Governor David Onley, who attacked the AODA's ineffectiveness in a review on the ineffectiveness and lack of enforcement of the AODA, AP1 stated that "If you don't enforce the rules then what is the point." Another AODA enforcement issue discussed by AP1 is that AODA tried to fix the issue with building code where design must only meet building code at the time of permit by needing buildings to be compliant with legislation in the year they open. They note that "if you got your permit in 2013 but your building was going to open in 2016, they have a deadline for buildings to be compliant by 2016 so your building should have been designed planning for that. It didn't, and nobody understood that, and nobody from the government enforced it." They also discussed the complacency that occurred when the AODA came into effect. As building code was updated and AODA came into effect, people thought that updating municipal accessibility standards would be excessive. This left a gap in municipal accessibility standards in cities like Toronto, which did not see their municipal accessibility standards updated from 2005 until 2021. AP1 also states that PWD are equal citizens and policies/legislation like AODA have not captured this. A positive development mentioned by AP1 is that The Human Rights Tribunal now says that following building code and AODA minimums are not a defense against the discrimination of disabled people. This is a positive development to push designs beyond bare minimums.

AP2 broadly discussed applicable accessibility legislation and guidelines. They noted that stricter enforcement of accessibility legislation would help get better consideration throughout projects. They mentioned that it is debated whether the current penalties work and if the government is truly following up with those that do not file accessibility reports.

AP2 also noted that better integration of accessibility policy is key. There are many levels of accessibility policy, such as the ACA, but this only applies to federal buildings. Then, there are provincial standards and regional/municipal standards. They note that legislation like AODA can only be considered one piece of the puzzle and bringing all of the moving parts together is a challenge that needs consistency. They also discuss the use of the Ontario Building Code, noting that some designers only use the Ontario building code as their guiding document, although it is comprehensive it is not intended to 100% deal with issues. Putting all of the accessibility guidelines in here would not solve the problem, "accessibility professionals and ongoing education are still needed."

In AP1's discussion of the Ontario Building Code, they mentioned the limitations it has for implementing truly accessible built environments. They discuss the fact that brand new buildings open that are already out of date with current standards. This is because building code states that the design must meet code at the time of permit, which will not account for accessibility changes when it opens. AP1 stated that with building code, writing a contract in 2017 means the building will be 7 years behind when it opens in 2024.

> "I'm working on another project that got delayed. So, it got its building permit in 2014. But it got delayed and stopped and they thought it was dead and now it's being built, but it's being built under the 2014 building code. So again, this building is going to open and the day it opens it's not compliant with current standards."

AP1 discussed that there are conversations behind the scenes about building code needing to be re-written top to bottom. They state that this conversation also needs to happen with documents like the Planning Act, implementing a lens that considers accessibility from top to bottom in The Act.

AP1 also briefly discussed the Accessible Canada Act. They noted some important elements that have come from the ACA, including the incorporation of the concept nothing about us without us, which is important because it is a slogan used for groups often marginalized from political, social, and economic opportunity and emphasizes that persons with disabilities need to have their say in the process. Another important development was the creation of an independent accessibility commissioner, noting that an independent body needs to be a part of accessibility implementation to coordinate and enforce the laws that we have. This avoids politicization of accessibility, because when accessibility is tied to politicians, they may be hesitant to enact legislation that could alienate their potential voters. They note that this is an issue with the AODA, which is lacking an independent body, which would make it easier to have a centralized place to direct accessibility issues.

AP2 noted that more provinces implementing accessibility legislation is a step in the right direction. They discussed a positive outlook for the general direction of legislation, stating that although accessibility legislation has its flaws, the fact that more provinces are adopting legislation is positive. They note that building code has also been making progress. It has not gone as far as is necessary but still in a good direction. They also noted that any municipality that creates accessibility standards and guidelines is helping move things forward, it benefits other municipalities who can adopt these standards and build off of them as well.

5.2 Accessibility education as a mechanism of change

AP1 noted that the biggest changemaker to better accessibility in the built environment would come with better education supplemented by government investment. Without investment in retraining trainers and changing programs, it becomes harder to build the next generation of accessibility leaders. They also noted that there is a need for a government review of programs to get rid of the systemic bias and discrimination against disabled people.

AP1 noted that post-secondary programs have been lacking regarding accessibility education. They note that adding a mandatory accessibility course into planning schools would have pushed change forward but "with all of the facets accessibility impacts, it shouldn't be restricted to a single course. Instead, it should ideally be part of every course. There is good design or design that discriminates part of the population." AP1 further discussed the idea of a single accessibility course being helpful in a planning curriculum, which would be better if mandatory but asserted that accessibility must be interlinked within all education courses and concepts. They noted that "if we treated accessibility education the same way we had treated Sustainable Development Goals and other global sustainability policies we would have a generation of professionals who are access oriented, in all sectors." If accessibility had been woven into the fabric of curricula in the way that sustainability concepts like SDGs and sustainable development have, true progress could be made. AP1 noted that if planners have received any accessibility training at all it is very limited in noting that, "it's not that I don't think people want to do it, it's everybody I trained says, nobody taught me that." They added to this point by empathizing with urban planners, stating "How could planners know about accessibility when they haven't had adequate education?" AP1 discussed the idea that more postsecondary programs for professionals working in the built environment need to understand who they are designing for, and that the end-user will not always be an average able-bodied person.

AP2 broadly discussed the concept of accessibility knowledge and where planners would be able to get more. They noted that there are many different places to get accessibility knowledge and acknowledged that planners will have problems gaining accessibility knowledge if it is just from a course or 'lunch and learn,' as the knowledge likely will not stay. From this point, they asserted that it is important for professionals like planners to have a baseline education in accessibility: "I think [accessibility education] is 100 percent needed, regardless of whether it's a planner, landscape designer, or architect. Any kind of education in this field is very important." From this, they did acknowledge their earlier point about the need for specific accessibility knowledge, noting that it is important for

accessibility professionals to still be a primary source of knowledge because they have 100% focus on the subject matter. They also noted that accessibility professionals with knowledge in key areas like vision loss or physical mobility are particularly important.

AP1 also discussed the concept that starting accessibility at the student level is critical. They note that they have seen more of an interest from students about accessibility recently, and that accessibility knowledge in planning curriculums would be highly beneficial.

AP1 also discussed the idea of professional regulatory bodies needing to be involved to create change as well. They discussed the Canadian Institute of Planners being involved in adding more accessibility-related courses and concepts into the planning curriculum for certified programs, stating that "governing organizations for curriculum can be a foundation of change, they have done this with sustainability already." AP1 also discussed the idea of students themselves being an excellent catalyst for change, noting that students inquiring about accessibility within their campus would drive change and that having accessibility speakers and auditors would provide great accessibility education opportunities. They concluded with the idea that students in their experience have a passion for diversity inclusion and have the power to enact change.

5.3 Planners need a higher stake in accessibility

The assertion that planners need a higher stake in accessibility was a theme that emerged in the interview with AP2. They note that the nature of planning is to deal with such a broad spectrum of issues and to bring them all together. They further this point by pointing out that a planner's role is to balance multiple issues within a project and there is no reason accessibility should not be part of that. They also state that planners should get ahead of the curve and be more responsible for accessibility. AP2 also noted that planning documents in the planning hierarchy tend to contain a generic statement like you must include inclusive design, but what does this accomplish? They state that documents in the planning framework like the Growth Plan and Official Plans having more accessibility goals would help projects have more of an accessibility focus and better involve planners in the

accessibility process. They note that in their experience working with planners, they are a separate consultant that typically does not touch anything related to inclusive design. This is worth noting because there is an opportunity for planners to collaborate more with accessibility consultants to champion the advancement of accessibility as part of their projects.

The theme of accessibility only being a recent conversation with planners was seen in the interview with AP1. They note that accessibility has had limited interaction with planners until recently and that they have limited experience working with planners because the conversation around planning and accessibility has been minimal to date. AP1 also stated that they were "previously unaware of the extent of a planner's role" and that recently they have had more experience with planners including hiring them for the accessibility firm.

From the conversation about their experience with urban planners, AP1 discussed how they could see the role of urban planners playing a bigger part in accessibility. They note that planners have a lot of power to shape our environments and act as connective tissue between built environment disciplines. It is important to enact accessibility policies like employment strategies, and it is important to design accessible environments but the connector between all of these parts is essential, urban planning must connect these facets to create a true flowing accessible built environment. AP1 further discussed this idea by noting that there is a lot of promise that comes with integrating planning into the accessibility conversation that could lead to more significant change. "Having this conversation about urban planning and what the possibilities and the power that urban planning actually has and if we integrated that into the conversation we've been having so long with architecture. We could really see a significant change."

5.4 Handling accessibility internally

AP2 notes that they have seen a shift toward organizations addressing accessibility internally over time. The large majority of RFPs do not have a place for an accessibility consultant on the project, firms may instead turn to someone in-house that is their

accessibility expert. When accessibility is handled in-house, the designer could be in conflict with their design team, which may cause their recommendations to be scrapped. Whereas with an independent consultant, they have separation and can make recommendations without having to change them. They note that building code consultants are always maintained separately. Due to this not being the case with accessibility, it is inconsistent, either being handled internally or with an external consultant. This is important because it can be a contributing factor to the inconsistencies in the built environment. Overall, AP2 noted that in their experience design teams are getting better at accepting inclusive design.

5.5 Dedicated accessibility consultants are needed

AP2 built on the previous conversation around accessibility consulting being handled internally by discussing dedicated accessibility consultants. They note that when the person in charge of implementing accessibility is not 100% focused on it, there is a high chance that things will be missing. They believe that accessibility consulting should be more of a strict profession. Overall, they note that more dedicated accessibility consultants are needed, as firms dedicated to accessibility have a better chance of getting accessibility right than a traditional planner taking a universal design approach on a project.

Adding to this, AP2 also noted that there are so many standards to follow that it can be confusing even as a professional.

5.6 Holistic design methods

The theme of holistic design methods needing to be more prominent emerged in the interview with AP1. They discussed how basic but important it is to consider the audience for whom you are designing. They note that holistic design requires teams to question who they are designing for and that designs must consider all people. They also note that designing with all people in mind does more than accommodate disability, it also captures many overlooked segments of our population. Benefits designed for a minority segment of the population benefit that group as well as people as a whole. They cite the example of curb cuts, which were one of the original universal design implementations. They were

designed to benefit those in wheeled mobility devices but had the added benefit of helping those pushing strollers and persons with limited mobility.

AP2 discussed the potential issues with relying on purely universal design approaches. They note that we will not be able to get to a point where there will be standard universal designs that work across all projects. Universal design should be an aspiration that designers are always thinking about, but due to variations among people, it is hard to implement universal designs that work for all. "Universal design should just be what you aspire to make sure you're always thinking about. But I don't think you're like just going to be a universal design grab bar, because every different user is going to use a grab bar differently." They later furthered that point by noting accessibility will not work with a generic formula.

AP1 also discussed the notion of an interdisciplinary approach to accessibility. They note that all levels and disciplines need to be a part of stopping discriminatory design from getting built and even praised in some cases. The Ryerson Student Learning Centre was cited as an example for winning design awards but being discriminatory in its design. They also note that an integrated approach across built environment professions is needed to redefine who are people and who are we designing for, this emerged at several points in the interview and is a key takeaway. The theme of siloed built environment professions also emerged at several points in the interview. AP1 noted that siloed disciplines do not coordinate or consult on accessibility. "Thinking holistically about the built environment means bringing all of the disciplines to the table."

5.7 Accessibility as an afterthought

AP1 often noted that accessibility is considered an afterthought by city-building professionals. They note that "we must acknowledge that our current design paradigm is discriminatory due to limited acknowledgment for inclusive design solutions." They note that lack of access is a human rights issue and that If we continue to think of accessibility as a nice thing to have, we will stay where we are. Once our society can understand that living

with a disability is part of the human condition, advances can happen. AP1 also discussed indicators that accessibility is an afterthought, things like the International Day of Persons with Disabilities often goes by every year with little to no acknowledgment from design professionals. They note that a top to bottom approach is needed to avoid accessibility being an afterthought.

The avoidance of design teams fully implementing inclusive design was a pattern that came up throughout the interview with AP2. They note that when design issues become complicated, design teams often get frustrated and look to avoid dealing with the issue, saving it for later. Due to inclusive design not being mandatory, these issues can be avoided. They also noted that "project teams often pick and choose which accessibility design standards will get implemented" instead of following the entire accessible design guideline. They also note that integrating the accessibility consultant throughout the project is a problem, consultants can often be left in the dark after initial conversations and not hear back about the project process. This leads to consultants having to chase work down as part of a design team, which can be very frustrating.

Another indicator that added to the theme of accessibility as an afterthought was implementing mobility features as the only accessibility measures in a design. AP1 noted that adding mobility features to a building does not encapsulate accessibility. Interventions like wheelchair ramps and curb cuts are minimal level accessibility and builders often stop there. Even minimal level accessibility goes wrong. AP1 cites the example of the planning process revealing 8000 curb cuts missing in Vancouver, however, the city budget allocated was minimal to rectify this. This essentially traps people and restricts their opportunities. AP1 furthers this point by illustrating the impact of poor accessibility, they discussed the notion of a butterfly effect from missing curb cuts leading to strain on other facilities like long-term care. This is because some people feel more comfortable in care facilities than attempting to navigate a built environment that seemingly doesn't want them there. They concluded this point by noting that a built environment with poorly integrated accessibility

cuts people off from jobs, opportunities, and a better quality of life and "that accessibility is an issue of human rights and discrimination, not just an error."

AP1 also discussed the notion of shaming poor accessibility to get better results. They note that the use of shaming is not ideal, but it is necessary to point out the flaws in the built environment. They cite the AODA Alliance as a good example of this. Poor accessibility is often so blatant that shaming is needed.

5.8 Accessibility as Misunderstood

A similar theme that emerged from accessibility as an afterthought was accessibility as misunderstood. AP1 notes that lack of education has led to misinformation on how well accessibility is being addressed. They discuss how the designers they work with often misunderstand legislation. "Designers are unaware of what is legislation, and treat the Design of Public Spaces like guidelines... It's more [designers] don't even know that they don't know." They also discuss interacting with an architect that thought AODA started in 2025, which is actually the deadline. Overall, AP1 believed that the importance of accessibility is being better acknowledged but progress has gotten worse from an actual understanding level since 2010.

AP1 also discusses the concept of the disability lens, which captures people currently disabled but forgets that as people age, disabilities can develop and worsen. The nature of disability as being misunderstood emerged at several points in the interview. They noted that there is a need for expanded research into sensory disabilities and environmental disabilities and that students have the opportunity to push this forward. They also note that there is limited research/problem solving for those living with multiple disabilities, which is an opportunity for the next generation of city builders.

5.9 Resistance to implementing accessibility measures

AP2 noted that design teams often have many excuses for not implementing accessibility features "Even issues like providing something as simple as an animal relief area right, you would think it's not a big deal but when people aren't used to doing something there's

always a resistance upfront." They further this point by noting that municipalities can be resistant to things they have not traditionally done, but it must be acknowledged that the traditional ways have marginalized particular groups of people. They cited another example discussing their work with a bigger municipality that was resistant to change, "they say no we don't provide electricity to this park or whatever but then you get frustrated it's like well, you should be, it's not about what you've done in the past, that's how you move forward." They note that accessibility awareness needs to move past having conversations and more into actual commitments to not building discriminatory environments. As an accessibility consultant, AP2 noted that they can make recommendations that are consistent across ten other standards, but they are ultimately volunteer standards (such as CSA B651-18), and the design team ultimately does not have to go above minimum standards.

AP2 also discusses the tension between designing creatively and integrating inclusion-specific design. They also noted the example of the Ryerson Student Learning Centre, which illustrates the issues of hangout steps as non-inclusive design choices that aim to be creative. They also cite the example of the Calgary Central Library. They note that it was frustrating that a brand-new library could have poor accessibility consideration, segregating the entrances for those needing accessibility measures from the main entrance.

5.10 Disability statistics

AP1 also discussed the lack of strong disability statistics as a contributor to accessibility being poorly considered. They noted that the often-cited 2017 Survey on Disability had a shortcoming as it relied on people to self-identify. They also note that a generational gap in the perception of disability can lead to skewed data, some older generations may have a fear of self-identifying their disability. They note that is generally difficult for accessibility statistics to capture the full picture. Not counting temporary disabilities misses a large, ever-evolving segment of people that would stand to benefit from better accessibility in the built environment.

"We don't even count, temporary disabilities. So, if you're looking at statistics how many people benefit from disability accommodations, well how many people have a head cold or are super stressed and not paying a lot of attention they could probably benefit from a lot of the visual cues for helping people with vision loss."

The survey also cannot account for the degeneration some disabilities can cause over time. This is important because planners tend to rely on statistics to conduct their work.

They also discussed the rapidly aging Canadian population and that with our aging population, the key infrastructure needed to support them is not even accessible — which is illogical.

5.11 Intersectionality and accessibility

The theme of accessibility overlapping with multiple other concepts and theories was also seen in the interview with AP1. They discussed how the concept of accessibility overlaps with sustainability. They questioned how something can be considered a sustainable design when a part of the population (that is growing) can not access the space. They state that "not accounting for the disabilities that can come with an aging population is not sustainable." They further this point by noting that an idea central to sustainability is creating things that will last through generations, building environments that are accessible is necessary to accommodate demographic shifts.

AP1 also noted that intersectionality accounts for multiple present disabilities and how they can overlap with each other within a person. They then noted that it is important to capture intersectionality beyond disabilities themselves, people of different races and classes should also be represented. AP1 noted that the field of accessibility can improve by bringing more diverse perspectives to the table, bringing persons with disabilities from different social and ethnic backgrounds to the table to better represent diverse views.

They then discussed how newer planning concepts have created an intersection with accessibility. They cite the walkable cities movement, noting that once the COVID-19

pandemic commenced, people started talking about walkable cities, opening an opportunity to question what walkable cities mean through a disability lens.

The theme of planning movements having linkages to accessibility also emerged in the interview with AP2. They noted that changes in priorities and trends can incidentally prioritize accessibility measures, such as planning concepts like aging in place and walkability linking with accessibility. They noted that with the onset of Covid, an emphasis was put on making wider sidewalks, something they had been requesting for years. "Now issues like aging in place getting linked with accessibility. All the different planning jargon like active transit or walkability. They're starting to make all those linkages."

5.12 Variation and diversity within disabilities

In discussing variations within disabilities AP2 noted that they avoid speaking about the diversity and variation within disabilities. They instead try to bring people into the project with those disabilities to better speak to it, this also allows them to be educated and have a better understanding as well. They noted that they disagree with those who try to speak for all the variation and diversity within disabilities. "The whole spectrum of autism is massive. It's the same with vision loss. Like, there's so many different variations. No one can profess to know all the answers and have all the answers, but I think it's part of, you know, you should have a general understanding and bring that to the table." AP2 also discussed their experience working with design teams, noting that often architects will focus on accommodating one disability, like ensuring the design impresses those with vision loss. It needs to then be explained that the design needs to focus on different disabilities and that there is so much variation in vision loss that it cannot accommodate every person experiencing it.

5.13 Accessibility awards and building certifications

By questioning if public-private partnerships are a good opportunity for better accessibility implementation, the theme of the negative effects of accessibility building certification emerged. AP1 noted that because organizations can receive accessibility plaques or

certification, they are confused about how there could still be accessibility problems. By showing them issues in person or through the AODA Alliance they quickly realize how bad it is. They note that awarding accessibility accolades to buildings can be dangerous because some of these buildings have poorly considered designs that may be replicated. This point was furthered by noting accessibility certifications have reversed progress, confusing certificate recipients about what accessibility truly is.

This trend also emerged in the interview with AP2, who discussed the detrimental effect of accessibility certifications on the accessible built environment. They discussed the Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification (RHFAC) and how RHFAC creates hundreds of new accessibility consultants after taking one course. They questioned who should be the overarching body that dictates that you are now a professional accessibility consultant. They did acknowledge that the baseline accessibility knowledge is an improvement but questioned what level of experience dictates that you are now qualified to review design drawings for accessibility. They discussed the concept of a gold accessibility certification, noting that it is unclear what a gold certification means as it does not exactly communicate who will be able to use the building. "Okay now it's a gold building, but what does that mean for the average person with whatever type of disability." They also discussed building certifications in general, stating "I even did a study on different certification processes and what it means at the end of the day, and our conclusion was a new doesn't mean anything to the person facing a barrier at any point in time." They also noted that private organizations have little accountability for what they do with government funding. They do not exactly need to show where it is being spent.

AP2 did note that there is a beneficial side to accessibility certification around awareness, noting that it is a positive element that Rick Hansen commercials and certifications at least give accessibility some publicity. They concluded their thoughts by noting "You can very easily say we're not far along enough and we need to do more, we will always need that voice to keep things pushing as well."

AP1 also acknowledged that there are good intentions for the Rick Hansen Foundation and other organizations creating accessibility certifications, but those creating them often do not know enough. They discuss the idea that simplifying accessibility into gold level or accessibility certified has detrimental effects, especially gold certification when there are still access issues. They state that "Celebrating the building also encourages replicating these mistakes... How do you spend money, creating a temple of barriers that everyone is celebrating because it's a fantastic building and copying really bad accessibility mistakes." They also noted that there have been attempts to work with certification organizations but that there seems to be a preference for simplicity, which is causing counterproductive accessibility help.

5.14 Persons with disabilities as the knowledge-keepers

A theme that emerged throughout the interview with AP1 was that PWD need to be at the centre of accessibility conversations. "The people with disabilities and lived experience, are the best knowledge keepers about what works and what doesn't work." AP1 notes that PWD should be involved in the design process as early as possible. They note that PWD should be engaged to inform design standards as well, which is often overlooked. AP1 also notes that it is important not to ask PWD to be problem solvers and ask, 'what do you need,' so that they can provide input on a proposal, learn about what the project will look to be doing, and indicate where they may see accessibility gaps. They also discuss the concept of paying PWD for their input. In the past, PWD would have to volunteer their time, but these are professional organizations and people contributing valuable knowledge and should be treated as such. "This is a person with professional expertise. You gotta pay them."

AP1 also discusses the idea that accessibility perspectives can be biased. They note that it can be better to hire a person that deals with orientation mobility training than one blind person because the trainer can relay the perspective of multiple people with varying degrees of disability instead of the potential bias that can come with one single

perspective. An advisory committee that represents a diversity of different abilities is a solution to avoid singular biases too.

5.15 The current building process drives accessibility backward

AP1 discussed how the building process hampers accessibility. They note that with the alternative financial procurement process, everything must be measurable, which is detrimental to accessibility. It is hard to simplify and get it down to that level. Ideally, the process would allow intuitive thinking, asking questions like does this work for the entire spectrum of people using this or not? When you simplify to make things more quantifiable, critical accessibility measures will be missing. They further this point by noting that the traditional funding model does not allow for flexibility and causes a lack of innovation, which applies to accessibility. Without measures like reserve budgets, it is hard to invest in lifecycle improvements. For example, installing assistive listening systems, which have seen added importance in the pandemic.

They also discuss how the accessibility decision-making process happening behind closed doors is detrimental. They note that accessibility decisions like access standards are happening behind closed doors, making it difficult to understand how decisions are being made. They further this point by stating "decisions are often not made in transparent ways around things like accessibility standards. There needs to be record-keeping of what occurred in meetings and what went into decisions." This is important to add a layer of public accountability to accessibility decisions.

5.16 Accessibility coordinators

AP1 also discussed the role of the accessibility coordinator, which is an important position that is fading away. They note that a lot of the accessibility coordinators hired during a wave 20 years ago are beginning to retire, and these positions are not being filled. Responsibilities for the position are being shifted to other roles. They note that accessibility standards came out more frequently when municipalities had coordinators. They also note that accessibility is now often being grouped into diversity and inclusion roles, but the

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accessibility knowledge is not being passed down from outgoing coordinators. "So, I think the accessibility coordinator is critical if I can get the ear of anybody back. That support that gives those people resources and reinstate that power that they once had to really help coordinate the policy changes in the city."

AP2 briefly touched on the role of accessibility coordinators. They noted that a lot of accessibility coordinators are assigned to an accessibility portfolio to have somebody internally working on it. Their main point on accessibility coordinators is that without them things would be worse off, however, there is inconsistency among municipal accessibility coordinators that does need improving.

5.17 Accessibility outlook

AP1 shared their outlook on accessibility throughout the interview. They noted that they do have a hopeful outlook based on certain progression, but overall, they see accessibility going in a negative direction. The overall sense of accessibility going in the wrong direction stems from their experiences with lack of accessibility knowledge among design teams and that "after teaching one project team about accessibility it is often back to square once a new project starts up" leading to cyclical nature of accessibility work. A degree of cautious optimism comes from social media being used to point out discrimination, which they describe as a hopeful development that can educate. Conversations on how to align the moving pieces that go into creating an accessible built environment are happening. They also note that talking about diversity and inclusion without accessibility has become viewed as doing it wrong. They also state that conversations are happening that are breaking the silos, talking across the board from the industrial designers to the urban planners. "That is what's going to create change so I'm very excited and hopeful because of that. And I'm eager to see where that's going to go."

Overall, AP2 noted that they have seen an improvement in accessibility over their 20 years of working in the field. They attribute this to seeing more students interested in learning about accessibility or addressing it in projects. They note that overall, there are inherent

flaws, but they see it moving in a positive direction despite these flaws. They also note that they see accessibility as more frequently understood now, although it still is not consistently implemented properly.

6.0 Discussion

The results from interviews with Accessibility Professionals 1 and 2 showed a degree of commonality. Both professionals noted that better baseline education for planners would lead to a better understanding of accessibility in the built environment. This aligned with concepts in reviewed literature, which noted that the diverse needs of persons with disabilities are not well understood by planners and that a better understanding of issues related to PWD is urgent for city planners (Terashima & Clark 2021; Imrie & Hall 2001; Biglieri, 2018; Lewis, 2009; Hall & Wilton, 2016). AP1 and AP2 see education as one of the main ways to remedy the lack of understanding the planning practice has for issues related to PWD. AP1 furthered the notion that education is a key mechanism for change by discussing the need for a top-down approach to accessibility, linking the concepts of accessibility within all courses of a city-building professionals' curriculum. AP1 noted that while designers have the desire to do better, they are often unaware of what they do not know: "It's not that I don't think people want to do it, it's everybody I trained says, nobody taught me that." AP1's noted that accessibility has had limited interaction with planners until recently. Due to this limited interaction planners generally know little about different facets of impairment, like cognitive disability — changing planners' perceptions of what the needs of PWD may be the first step in building a more inclusive city (Biglieri, 2018). This point also further emphasizes the need for city-building professionals to have baseline accessibility education.

6.1 Accessibility legislation + misalignment of policy

AP1 and AP2 were also aligned regarding accessibility legislation and overall policy failing to achieve better accessibility. AP2 states that documents in the planning framework like the Growth Plan and Official Plan having more accessibility goals would help projects have more of an accessibility focus and better involve planners in the accessibility process. Accomplishing this means planners engaged in policy writing need to write goals into policy, promoting concepts like striving for inclusive design in all built form. Terashima &

Clark (2021) discuss how inclusive design models have had little standing in policy and the decision-making process. More emphasis on inclusive design in planning policy would only have positive effects on overall accessibility in the built environment. It must be noted that AP2 also stated that planning documents in the planning hierarchy tend to contain a generic statement like you must include inclusive design "what does this accomplish?" Making broad planning statements more deliberate is necessary across the practice and requires a re-examination of how policies and goals at the top of the planning hierarchy feed into the mechanisms that truly regulate change like zoning bylaw regulations. This could be an opportunity for the municipal accessibility guidelines developed by many cities to have legislative teeth beyond projects run by their respective cities.

6.2 Accounting for differences in disabled experiences

AP1 and AP2 both acknowledged that the varying degree of differences between disabilities is a challenge to design for. Reviewed literature noted that the term disability itself is chaotic in the sense that it suggests a commonality of types and experience that fall under one umbrella term (Imrie & Hall, 2001). AP2 responded to questioning on the variations that exist within disabilities by noting that they avoid speaking to the diversity and variation within disabilities and instead try to bring people into the project with those disabilities to better speak to it. They state "the whole spectrum of autism, it's massive it's the same with vision loss like there's so many different variations. No one can profess to know all the answers and have all the answers." This perspective shared by AP2 aligns with bio-social perspectives discussed in Imrie & Hall (2001) who note that impairment is usually collapsed into a series of general and chaotic categories, such as vision, mobility, and hard of hearing, which does little to reveal the complexities of impairment. AP2 also aligns with the suggestion Imrie and Hall make, noting that property professionals' responses to the design needs of disabled people must be flexible and adaptable to the myriad of potential bodily interactions within the built environment. It is key that planners have a stronger consideration for flexibility that can account for the variable ages and abilities of those who will use the space being planned and/or designed. To accomplish this, accessibility

consultants should be retained on projects when possible and a cross-section of persons with disabilities should be engaged to provide their input on where a project could improve from a disability lens. As AP1 noted, PWD should be engaged in a way that asks what they need to make a project accessible, not just asking where they see problems in a given plan or design.

6.3 Limitations of universal design

AP2 noted that universal design should be an aspiration that designers are always thinking about, but due to variations among people, it is hard to implement universal designs that work for all. "Universal design should just be what you aspire to make sure you're always thinking about. But I don't think you're like just going to be a universal design grab bar, because every different user is going to use a grab bar differently." They furthered their point by noting accessibility will not work with a generic formula. This aligns with literature that raises doubts about a universal design approach. Imrie & Hall (2001) argue that there are so many different types of sight loss that you cannot create access for all, that universal design is not possible — as there are too many contrasts and types with visual impairment and also depth of vision varies so much. universal design may be promising much more than is technically available or feasible with its one size fits all approach (Imrie & Hall, 2001; Hamraie, 2013). The implication for planners is to not think that a totalizing design for all can be achieved, but to ensure they are striving for universal design that can accommodate users of all ages and abilities.

6.4 Role of the planning profession

Terashima and Clark (2021) noted that the need to facilitate better living conditions has been recognized by planners but how planning can play an effective role in addressing the needs of PWD has been unclear. AP1 provides a solution to this by noting that planners can act as connective tissue between built environment disciplines. For example, AP1 discussed how accessibility policy around employment strategies is present and a project will exist with a need for accessible design, the urban planner would be an ideal conduit to

connect these two concepts in a project. This aligns with another point made by Tersahima & Clark (2021) who note that the efforts to address various needs by PWD have been siloed across multiple different units of government and that planners are in a unique position to coordinate efforts across different units of government. AP2 noted that accessibility consultants should ideally be leading this role but also acknowledged that most RFPs do not have a place for an accessibility consultant on the project which will often lead a firm to handle it internally or not at all. AP2 also noted that the nature of planning is to deal with a broad spectrum of issues and bring them all together. In this case, a planner with accessibility knowledge would be able to connect the necessary accessibility concepts and could bring the right people to the table to ensure accessibility is well implemented in projects.

6.5 Limits of building code

AP1 and AP2 both discussed the Ontario Building Code and the limitations it has for implementing truly accessible built environments. AP1 discusses the fact that brand new buildings open that are already out of date with current standards, stating that with building code, writing a contract in 2017 means the building will be 7 years behind when it opens in 2024. AP2 discussed noted that many designers simply follow building code and though it is a comprehensive document, it does not fully deal with accessibility issues. Access codes and statutes are established in most countries, but they are generally vague and provide regulatory control for substantial new constructions while doing little to regulate access provision in the refurbishment of existing buildings (Imrie & Hall, 2001). A standards-led approach rarely encourages designers and/or builders to exceed minimum building standards, which means that the 'only-just-acceptable-solution' is often taken as the optimal or only outcome (Staples & Essex, 2016). Imrie & Hall's (2001) assertion that countries tend to prioritize the investment decisions of developers within an overall framework that seeks to secure minimum levels of provisions for disabled people through statute pushes these points further. By designing to minimum level standards, it prioritizes cost savings over building truly accessible built environments. As noted by both

professionals, designing to building code is not enough, it needs to work alongside other accessibility legislation to create accessible environments. With regards to planning, this means that planners need to champion accessibility guidelines that go above the minimum code on project teams. They need to think critically if minimum standards need to be exceeded to suit the needs of the project and the audience that will use it.

6.6 Planners' perceptions of difference – who are they planning for?

AP1 discussed planners needing to understand who they are designing for, and that the end-user will not always be an average able-bodied person. This idea aligns with Hamraie (2013) who noted that neutral design is a form of ignorance, designed to accommodate typically white, able-bodied males (Hamraie, 2013). In urban planning, the presence of neutral design is most prevalent in the provision of standardized housing. Staples & Essex (2016) discuss how planners agree that if an evidence-based need for particular housing is identified then the local planning authority should be able to prescribe provisions to meet that need. Planners felt that new planning regulations would be required, because 'developers would be less happy to provide inclusive homes without imposing new planning regulations. As noted by AP1, evidence-based need is hard to capture statistically as methods like the 2017 survey on disability relied on self-identification. Despite this, there is still an obvious evidence-based need based on the rapidly aging Canadian population. AP1 notes that with the rapidly aging population, not having the key infrastructure to support them like housing is illogical. Planners need to push for more regulations for developers to provide inclusive homes. Imrie and Hall (2001) note that the majority of statutory responses worldwide seek to regulate access in buildings used by the public, with little control over private dwellings or public transport. Countries prioritize the investment decisions of developers within an overall framework that seeks to secure minimum levels of provisions for disabled people through statute (Imrie & Hall, 2001). Legislation tends to be weak because of voluntary frameworks which are designed to educate and persuade, rather than compel providers of goods and services to be sensitized to the needs of disabled people (Imrie & Hall, 2001). With the growing

prevalence of the concept of aging in place, a rapidly aging population, and a lack of accessible housing stock, a need to push for stronger regulation to implement inclusively designed housing is obvious.

The theme of siloed built environment professions also emerged at several points in the interview. AP1 noted that siloed disciplines do not coordinate or consult on accessibility. "Thinking holistically about the built environment means bringing all of the disciplines to the table." This point aligned with reviewed literature, which noted a lack of accessibility coordination across disciplines (Imrie & Hall, 2001; Terashima & Clark, 2021). Imrie & Hall (2001) particularly discuss that the problem of accessibility cannot be tackled piecemeal but requires a holistic approach, there is a need for architects, engineers, and urban planners to realize that token provision of a few reserved parking lots, ramps, toilets and lifts are insufficient (Imrie & Hall, 2001). AP1 also notes that an integrated approach across built environment professions is needed to redefine who are people and who are we designing for. They add that designing with all people in mind does more than accommodate disability, it also captures many overlooked segments of our population. Benefits designed for a minority segment of the population benefit that group as well as people as a whole. The implication for urban planners aligns with their typical role, the need to work outside of a silo and collaborate with other city-building professionals and coordinate holistically.

6.7 Implications for ignoring accessibility in planning

AP1 also discussed the implication of a built environment with poorly integrated accessibility. Noting that it cuts people off from jobs, opportunities, and a better quality of life and "that accessibility is an issue of human rights and discrimination, not just an error." This point is aligned with literature discussing the design of buildings and public spaces as a non-value-neutral and passive act. The design of the built environment actively forms and shapes the assumptions that the designers, architects, and planners of these value-laden contexts hold concerning who will (and should) inhabit the world. In short, built environments serve as litmus tests of broader social exclusions (Hamriae, 2013). Planners need to understand the implication of poorly integrated accessibility. It is not just a design

error, it is actively ruining people's lives —cutting them off from economic opportunity, social lives, and better health.

AP1 and AP2 both discussed how newer planning concepts have created an intersection with accessibility. They cite the walkable cities movement, noting that once covid happened people started talking about walkable cities, opening an opportunity to question what walkable cities mean through a disability lens. They also discuss how the concept of aging in place has brought up accessibility principles without practitioners even really knowing it. The intersection of planning movements and accessibility was also discussed in reviewed literature. Aging in place is a fundamental concern of universal design, the prioritization of flexible design aims to accommodate people of all ages and abilities, in the context of a home this can accommodate a user through their lifespan (Hamraie, 2013). Biglieri (2018) notes that a built environment conducive to walkability allows older populations to get more physical activity and interact with their community, which is key for limiting cognitive decline (Biglieri, 2018). The concept of the walkable 15-minute city as it relates to accessibility was also discussed by McCormick et. al, 2019; Kurdi & Abdallah, 2021. The implication for planners is to look beyond the buzz words like '15-minute city' and 'age in place' to see how these concepts can improve the lives of marginalized populations — when done correctly. Criticism for the concept already exists from an accessibility perspective. Kurdi & Abdallah (2021) critique the 15-minute city paradigm, noting that the idea of the 15-minute city does little to account for the needs of the disabled community, not considering that many people with disabilities rely on vehicles, the walkability of 15-minute cities must consider accessible paths and space for people with disabilities, as well as safety measures (Kurdi & Abdallah, 2021). It will be important to have the right people at the table to ensure initiatives that promote change in urban form like the 15-minute city movement do not cause unintended harm.

6.8 Centering disabled perspectives in planning processes

A theme that emerged throughout interviews with AP1 and AP2 was that PWD need to be at the centre of accessibility conversations. "The people with disabilities and lived

experience, are the best knowledge keepers about what works and what doesn't work."
AP1 notes that PWD should be involved in the design process as early as possible. A lack of
engagement with PWD by the design community was a common thread across reviewed
literature (Imrie & Hall, 2001; Staples & Essex, 2016; Terashima & Clark 2021; Goodley,
2011). With the obligation for planners to engage and define the public interest it is evident
that more engagement needs to occur with PWD and planners. AP1 also discusses the idea
that accessibility perspectives can be biased. This aligns with literature noting that a
criticism of engagement noted by Imrie & Hall (2001) comes from architects, who note that
access groups tend to have their own agenda and can be narrow in their focus, only
looking at their specific disabilities, to the detriment of other user groups (Imrie & Hall,
2001). AP1 notes that it can be better to hire a person that deals with orientation mobility
training than one blind person because the trainer can relay the perspective of multiple
people with varying degrees of disability instead of the potential bias that can come with
one single perspective. An advisory committee that represents a diversity of different
abilities is a solution to avoid singular biases too. These notes on how to accurately collect
disability perspectives should be noted by planners.

　　AP1 discussed how the building process hampers accessibility. They note that with
the alternative financial procurement process, everything must be measurable, which is
detrimental to accessibility. They note that ideally, the process would allow intuitive
thinking and less reliance on making things quantifiable, which often leads to critical
accessibility measures being missing. They further this point by noting that the traditional
funding model does not allow for flexibility and causes a lack of innovation, which applies
to accessibility. Without measures like reserve budgets, it is hard to invest in lifecycle
improvements. Imrie & Hall (2001) discuss the overall procurement process and how the
Design and Build approach is the preferred method for developing projects, in which the
details of design are itemized and costed in advance. This implies that significant change
would be resisted by contractors after the project commences. They note that the design
and build process renders the consultative process irrelevant and potentially estranges

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disabled people from the design process if they are not considered at the onset of the project (Imrie & Hall, 2001). This aligns with points made by AP1 and AP2 noting the PWD, and accessibility consultants need to be involved at the onset of a project to truly effect change. For planners, they need to know that disability perspectives need to be coordinated in a project team from the onset. This is important, because due to the typical financial procurement process, if accessibility is not involved at the onset of a project there is often a limited budget to implement it down the road. Accessibility mistakes are also much costlier to rectify post-construction. The implications of not doing so were discussed by both AP1 and AP2, citing case studies of the Ryerson Student Learning Centre and Calgary Central Library. AP2 shared an example of trying to get electricity to a park "they say no on we don't provide electricity to this park or whatever but then you get frustrated it's like well, you should be it's not about what you've done in the past, that's how you move forward." AP2 notes that accessibility awareness needs to move past having conversations and more into actual commitments to not building discriminatory environments.

6.9 The role of accessibility coordinators and committees within municipalities

AP1 and AP2 also both discussed the role of the accessibility coordinator, which is an important position that is fading away. They note that a lot of the accessibility coordinators hired during a wave 20 years ago are beginning to retire, and these positions are not being filled. Responsibilities for the position are being shifted to other roles. They note that accessibility standards came out more frequently when municipalities had coordinators. If accessibility coordinator roles continue to diminish it could be an opportunity for urban planners to act as better coordinators of accessibility. This absolutely does not replace the value of a dedicated accessibility coordinator but would be a valuable stop-gap measure.

7.0 Proposed Future Research

Future research based on this project will engage professional planners. In a second phase of this research planning perspectives will be gauged based on the following questions:

Table 2: Future Research Questions

Question	Why ask this?	Connected themes
1. What do you think of when you hear the term accessibility?	The purpose of this question would be to start the interview with a baseline understanding of the accessibility knowledge of the planner being interviewed. This question will look to see if planners make a connection between accessibility for persons with disabilities and the built environment	Literature indicated that the term 'disability' and the differential needs of persons with disabilities are not well understood by planners, and a better understanding of issues related to PWD is urgent for city planners (Terashima & Clark 2021; Imrie & Hall 2001; Biglieri, 2018; Lewis, 2009; Hall & Wilton, 2016).
2. How do you think of accessibility on a daily basis?	The purpose of this question is to understand if planners consider accessibility in their daily work and to see if planners make a linkage with their everyday planning responsibilities and accessibility.	Interview findings noted that a planner's role is to balance multiple issues within a project and there is no reason accessibility should not be part of that. Findings also showed that in their experience working with planners, they are a separate consultant that typically doesn't touch anything related to inclusive design.
3. What do you think of regarding cognitive disabilities as they relate to the built environment?	The purpose of this question is to see if planners understand cognitive disabilities and to see if they have knowledge of disability beyond physical impairments	Literature indicated that planners know little about cognitive disability (Biglieri, 2018) and Professionals' lack of knowledge and awareness of disability is a significant barrier in

		inhibiting the development of appropriate design to meet the needs of disabled people (Terashima & Clark 2021; Imrie & Hall, 2001).
4. Are you aware of the social model of disability?	The purpose of this question is to see if planners are aware of the social model of disability, which puts responsibility on those designing the built environment to accommodate PWD. This is in contrast to the medical model which places fault on the individual.	There is an opportunity for planning scholarship and practice to study how our communities are built in order to have an impact on the well-being of PWD (Biglieri, 2018; Staples & Essex, 2016). The way we plan cities can either enable or disable persons with disabilities (Biglieri, 2018).
5. Are you aware of the applicable accessibility legislation in Ontario?	The purpose of this question is to gauge the planners' understanding of accessibility legislation, probes from this question can see if planners are aware of the accessibility policy goals in documents like the Official Plan. Another probe that can stem from this is asking if planners are aware of their local accessibility standards. Local standards are important because they contain accessible design solutions instead of high-level goals.	Interview findings overviewed many of the ways accessibility legislation has failed to achieve better accessibility in Canada and Ontario as a whole, if planners are unaware of accessibility legislation it would further indicate flaws in the accessibility policy framework. Interview findings also acknowledged that high-level accessibility goals do little to truly effect change.
6. Can you share with me some of the education you have had related to accessibility?	The purpose of this question is to understand the education (or lack thereof) that planners have had related to accessibility	Literature indicated a lack of accessibility and disability knowledge among city-building professionals (Terashima & Clark, 2021; Imrie & Hall, 2001) and interview findings noted that the biggest changemaker to better

		accessibility in the built environment would come with better education. Interview findings also acknowledged that education for city-building professionals has been lacking.
7. Do you have any experience consulting people with disabilities on a project?	The purpose of this question is to understand if planners have undertaken engagement of PWD and if they are aware of the importance of engaging a cross-section of PWD in the design process. A probe that could stem from this question is if they have experience working with an accessibility consultant.	This is a key question, a central theme that emerged from interview research findings was that PWD need to be at the centre of design solutions relating to accessibility. Literature also overviewed the culture of engagement in the planning practice (Davidoff, 1965; Arnstein, 1969) indicating that planning has the capacity to better engage PWD. Interview findings also indicated that dedicated accessibility consultants are important because they can have 100% focus on accessibility solutions

8.0 Conclusion

Through reviewed literature, a lack of accessibility understanding from planners was established. This lack of understanding stems from disability not being well understood by city-building professionals, an overall poor planning and design process as it relates to accessibility and a gap in understanding of who city-building professionals are designing for. Interviews with accessibility professionals largely confirmed reviewed literature. Professionals highlighted that accessibility policy and land use policy are misaligned in terms of enforcing accessibility goals and that there is an opportunity for urban planning to take a larger role in addressing accessibility. Interviewed accessibility professionals also discussed the benefits of universal design approaches while also acknowledging that they cannot always account for the differences of the disabled experience. Accessibility professionals also acknowledged the ramifications of ignoring accessibility, and that this creates exclusionary environments that segregate PWD from the built environment. Recommendations that emerged from reviewed literature and accessibility professional interviews included a need to centre disabled perspectives in the planning process, the need to work alongside dedicated accessibility consultants, and a dire need for increased accessibility education to establish baseline accessibility knowledge for urban planners.

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Appendix A

Introductory Question:

1. Tell me more a bit about your work, how does it align with accessibility best practices in planning?

Experience questions:

2.   We know that the AODA exists, and that municipalities have accessibility design guidelines, is this enough to achieve accessibility?

Probe: Do you think this is a problem with implementation (at a particular level)?

Probe 2: Or is it about enforcement, would stricter enforcement give legislation more teeth?

Probe 3: Do existing guidelines capture all access needs?

3.   Can you tell me about some of your experiences working with urban planners?

4.   Do planners know enough about accessibility?

Prompts: Do planners know enough about making the built environment accessible, access to engagement process, built environment/design fixes, differing experiences of PWD

5.   Where should planners go if they do not have the necessary accessibility knowledge?

- Probe: Are there any interventions you can think of to remedy this gap? (Prompts: better university-level education, professional modules)

Value Questions:

6.   What do you think the role of the urban planning practice should be in terms of including accessibility into the practice?

- Probe: Does this align with the current state of the practice, what do you see as a gap between ideal implementation and reality?

7.   How can urban planners better champion accessibility on an individual professional level?

Opinion Questions

8.   Who's responsibility should it be to enforce accessibility, implement accessibility and teach accessibility?

- Probe: Should public-private partnerships be considered a bigger opportunity for addressing accessibility issues in planning?

Knowledge Questions

9.   The complex nature of disability means that there is a high variation and intersectionality between disabilities themselves, how can planners best account for the differential needs of Persons with Disabilities?

10.   Have you seen a shift in the accessibility landscape in recent times, what direction do you see things moving in?

Prompts: for example, in policy education, social climate

11.   I am going to interview planners on their accessibility knowledge in the next phase. Are there any things you think I need to ask them, or things you want to know from them?

Optional Questions

12.   To begin, I would like for you to describe what an ideal city looks like to you; what principles make a good city?

13.   What accessibility measures have you seen in other places that you think should be standard across urban areas?

14.   What do you think of accessibility coordinators at municipalities?