A CITY ACCESSIBLE FOR EVERYONE

The City of Gothenburg’s work on improving accessibility
Gothenburg is Sweden’s second largest city and was founded in 1621. Gothenburg has the largest port in the Nordic Region and a wonderful archipelago, but it is also known as the city highly regarded as a venue for major sporting events, entertainment and culture. A former industrial city, Gothenburg evolved into a city of creation and innovation and now into a city of commerce and education.

Gothenburg – an accessible city where every citizen of Gothenburg should have the same opportunity of taking part in the life of the community.

The city’s aim and vision

The City of Gothenburg has a political aim to make Gothenburg accessible for everyone. The accessibility work taking place in the community goes hand in hand with the disability policy and to create a city for all.

The vision for Gothenburg is an accessible city where every citizen in Gothenburg has the same opportunity of taking part in the life of the community. Gothenburg should be the best city in which to live and everyone in the city should feel proud to be a citizen of Gothenburg.
How the city works with accessibility

Sweden and the city have signed up to the UN Declaration on Human Rights. All the city’s employees must pursue their work with respect for the human rights of the individual according to the international conventions that Sweden has undertaken to follow.

Work on accessibility issues is taking place broadly and systematically in the city’s administrations and companies, in the region and in collaboration with representatives from commerce and industry and property owners. Gothenburg has 10 city district administrations, 18 specialist administrations and 25 companies. The work with accessibility in Gothenburg is done as a part of regular operations and is monitored by a supervisory system that leads to constant improvement. Systematic follow-up and training are provided by process management and networks.

Collaboration with advisory Board on issues of disability and for older people is systematic and pervades the city’s work. The City of Gothenburg has advisory Boards on disability issues as well as for old people. These Advisory Boards are placed both at the City executive board and at all the city district committees, as well as the Travel Service Board. These are consultative bodies for their specific areas of and work to promote mutual exchange of knowledge and information between representative organizations and the political committees. This ensures good quality in decisions and action at all levels. The city is for everyone and its approach is to get it right from the beginning.

Gothenburg has a development center for older people and works with strategies how to meet an aging population with skills, housing development and welfare technology.

Gothenburg University, with its 50,000 students, works on the principle of making education accessible for people with disabilities, for example by offering assistance in the form of annotation support and specially adapted examination procedures.
Urban environment

The city has a holistic perspective with regard to the urban environment, a city for everyone, with policy and programs concerning its design. The question of accessibility is central and co-operation takes place on a broad front between administrations and companies. One of the political goals in the governing document is to stimulate universal design in the procurement.

Everybody should as far as possible be able to use ordinary transport, housing, service functions and facilities. For this reason the city is trying to reduce the number of special solutions for individuals with disabilities.

When new housing is being built, accessibility is already considered at the stage of the detailed development plan so that the area being planned will be as accessible as possible. An accessibility advisor is employed by the technical administrations in the City of Gothenburg to help and to support in the detailed development process. In the event of lack of clarity at the production stage, the constructors are required to turn to experts on accessibility issues.

Since 2007 the City of Gothenburg has a policy for the city playgrounds and since 2012 guidelines for accessible playgrounds. A mobile application has been developed to help visitors to find accessible playgrounds, and to help to find public toilettes.

All the 70 000 municipal rental apartments have been inventoried for accessibility using Accessibility Labeling as a tool. The labeling is shown as a T on the market website for rental apartments Boplats Göteborg. The accessibility labeling of housing is a tool of consumer information that is to the benefit of everyone.

The accessibility inventories of the municipal rental are presented in the “Äldrebladet”. The “Äldrebladet” is a yearly factsheet that present the population from different socio-economic perspectives, the make-up of housing stock and areas in which elderly people reside. The “Äldrebladet” is used for analyzing and planning for the elderly’s needs of housing.

An Urban Environment Questionnaire is sent out every second year for follow up of what the citizens think about the environment and what environment behavior they have. This investigation is done partly to give the City of Gothenburg, an action oriented basis for environmental work in the City. In the questionnaire there are for example questions about accessibility.
Public transport helps everyone to move around independently in the community. Public transport in Gothenburg is provided by trams, buses, boats and trains. Most public transport vehicles and the main stops afford good accessibility in Gothenburg. The City’s work for an accessible public transport leads to improvements for all travelers. This includes more easily accessible information and physical measures that make entering and alighting easier. A good example is audible destination and stop announcements, which have also made public transport more attractive to tourists.

All bus, trams and boat stops are charted in a database and whenever refurbishment or rebuilding takes place the information is updated. There is also a database listing all public transport. This is used for traffic planning, and as a source of information for the Travel Planner.

Flexlinjen is a demand-responsive bus service that can be used by everyone. It runs in limited areas and can get closer to the destination than other public transport. All the boats to the archipelago have gangplanks adapted for wheelchairs and, if necessary, special gangplanks that can be raised and lowered to reduce the incline. Number of landing stages are equipped with floating sections that ensure the landing stage and the boats are on the same level.

Travel instructors help people who are not used to travel to take the first step towards the use of public transport. They provide support and security all the way from the person’s home. A travel planner can help find a journey that meets individual access requirements, such as space for a wheelchair or audible stop notification. If necessary, people with and without various disabilities are offered guidance/assistance to make the journey possible.

For people whose disabilities make it impossible for them to travel alone there is a form of public transport specifically for persons with disabilities, the special transport service.

Ten of the twelve airport buses providing the airport service are accessible and it is planned that all the buses will be accessible by 2015. Gothenburg’s Central railway station is adapted for accessibility and can be used by everyone. A special website dealing with accessibility has been created to produce information quickly and easily, for example, guidance route, the service of sighted guides etc.
**Instrument for accessibility**

The accessibility database, TD 2.0, is an internet based inventory tool made by Västra Götaland Region in collaboration with different interest organizations and is used for systematic assessment that leads to action planning and to action, and provides citizens and tourists in Gothenburg with statistics and information on accessibility. In the city of Gothenburg is an accessibility inventory taking place of the city’s 3000 public buildings and spaces. The results of the inventory are presented on the city website, goteborg.se.

The largest amusement park in the Nordic Region, Liseberg, aims to be accessible to everyone and 2013 the park began an inventory using the accessibility database, TD 2.0, for information on accessibility.

Shops and property owners in Gothenburg are working today to make the inner city more attractive. As a part of the work on accessibility, shops, cafes and restaurants have been inventoried with the accessibility database and there is information on their website.

**Accessibility to information**

Gothenburg has two official websites, goteborg.se and goteborg.com to inform and communicate with the public.

goteborg.se is a common platform with basic information on the activities of the City of Gothenburg and its accessibility, organization, services and policy. The structure of the website is based largely on a template providing both physical accessibility and accessibility on the web. The most important texts on the website are rewritten in Plain Language, language as clear and simple as possible. Sign language films and a text-to-speech function using Readspeaker are available.

goteborg.com is Gothenburg’s official visit and events guide aimed at tourists and visitors to Gothenburg. The website has won first prize two years in succession in the Internetworld’s competition.

**Winner of the Access City Award 2014**

City of Gothenburg is the proud winner of the Access City Award 2014. The annual competition is organised by the European Commission and awards European cities that have shown exceptional good work with addressing accessibility issues. The competition is intended to recognise cities that have high goals and have a holistic approach to creating an accessible environment for everyone, with a focus on people with disabilities. The City of Gothenburg’s efforts to integrate people with all types of disabilities in the society has made us this year’s winning city.

Read more about the award on: www.goteborg.se/accesscityaward2014

**The future**

Gothenburg celebrates its 400th anniversary of its founding in 2021 and by then, it should, with considerable pride, be able to state that in a deeper sense it will be accessible to everyone.

The city’s work is methodical and comprehensive and is based on the active participation of the whole community. Clear and ambitious policy aims together with the co-operation model and systematic work on accessibility will make Gothenburg even stronger in its efforts to make the city inclusive and socially sustainable in the future.