



Accessibility Plan 2024



INTRODUCTION

The Village of Ashcroft is committed to fostering an inclusive and accessible environment for all residents and visitors. This Accessibility Plan outlines our approach to identifying, removing, and preventing barriers to accessibility. The plan aligns with legislated requirements in the Accessible BC Act and incorporates feedback from the community to ensure that the Village remains welcoming and accessible to everyone, including those with disabilities. The plan is a collaborative effort involving community members, stakeholders, and the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC).



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Village of Ashcroft's 2024 Accessibility Plan is a strategic framework aimed at fostering an inclusive and accessible environment for all residents and visitors. In alignment with the Accessible BC Act, the plan addresses barriers across various domains, including physical spaces, communication methods, and environmental factors. The plan was developed in collaboration with the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) and integrates feedback from the community to ensure the Village remains welcoming and accessible to everyone, including individuals with disabilities. Key objectives of the plan include enhancing physical accessibility, improving communication for individuals with impairments, fostering inclusive community engagement, and addressing environmental accessibility issues. Specific action items include upgrading village infrastructure (e.g., installing ramps, elevator lifts, and automatic doors), improving street lighting, and ensuring public amenities like bathrooms and picnic areas are accessible. The plan also outlines a phased implementation strategy with short-term, medium-term, and long-term goals, supported by annual reviews and continuous community feedback.

WHAT IS ACCESSIBILITY

Accessibility means designing and organizing our products, services, and environments so that they are easy to use by everyone, including people with disabilities. This involves considering various needs, such as visual, auditory, physical, and cognitive impairments, to ensure that all individuals can access, understand, and benefit from what we offer. Our goal is to create an inclusive experience that removes barriers and allows equal participation for everyone.

OBJECTIVES

- * To ensure that all publicly owned properties in Ashcroft are accessible to people of all abilities.
- * To comply with the Accessibility British Columbia Act Regulations (ABCA)
- * To continuously improve accessibility based on community feedback.
- * The Draft Accessibility Plan (DAP) is a living document and will be edited as needed.

KEY AREAS OF FOCUS

A formal accessibility assessment will be conducted in collaboration with the Rick Hansen Foundation, following which an action plan will be developed. This plan will take into account suggestions from the community and may include various proposed initiatives itemized below. It is important to note that the assessment by the Rick Hansen Foundation is application-based, requiring the Village to submit a formal application. Additionally, the Village will pursue grant funding to support the implementation of the action plan once it is finalized. Some aspects may be covered by the maintenance budget and will be considered during budget discussions.

- * **Enhance Physical Accessibility:** Ensure that all public spaces, buildings, and infrastructure is unrestricted for individuals with accessibility challenges.
- * **Improve Communication Accessibility:** Facilitate effective communication methods for individuals with hearing, vision, or cognitive impairments.
- * **Foster Inclusive Community Engagement:** Engage with the community to continuously identify and address accessibility barriers on public property.
- * **Promote Mental Health Accessibility:** Provide access to resources for mental health accessibility.
- * **Address Environmental Accessibility Issues:** Mitigate environmental factors that impact accessibility.

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK OF IDENTIFIED BARRIERS

Based on Community feedback received by the Accessibility Advisory Committee from the community, several key barriers to accessibility have been identified:

1. Physical Barriers

- * Need for levers instead of knobs on doors.
- * Requirement for ramps, elevators, or lifts where there are steps.
- * Heavy doors and improperly situated doors that are difficult to open.
- * Insufficient, uneven and narrow sidewalks.
- * Inadequate street and walkway lighting.
- * Insufficient clearing of sidewalks and pathways in the downtown area (including roadways where a path does not exist).
- * Insufficient, uneven, narrow or obstructed sidewalks/walkways.

2. Environmental Barriers

- * Noise and vibrations from train whistles and idling trains.
- * High temperatures in village-rented building without central air conditioning.



Barrier means “anything that hinders the full and equal participation in society of a person with an impairment.” (ABCA)

A barrier may be the result of environments, attitudes, practices, policies, information, communications, or technologies.

COMMUNITY SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTION

1. Employment

Access:

- * Action plans for an accessible work space are noted in **The Built Environment**.

2. The Built Environment

Doors: Upgrade to Village of Ashcroft Office:

- * Install automatic doors and technology such as auto locks and buzzers.

New On-Ramps:

- * Install or repair sidewalk dropdowns ensuring they are level with the road.

Sidewalk Improvements:

- * Prioritize accessibility in the Annual Sidewalk Inspection. Replace boardwalk with concrete sidewalk at Heritage Park on Railway Ave.
- * Additional sections of sidewalk and pathway could be added every year over the long term.

Mobility Surfaces:

- * Replace gravel in park walkways and the Community Garden with an accessible surface to improve maneuverability.

Disabled Parking:

- * Mark disabled parking spots in the downtown core and install appropriate sidewalk access where required.

Install Ramps, Elevator or Rail Lifts:

- * Install elevators or lifts in Village owned buildings to ensure accessibility and safety for all users.

Door Accessibility:

- * Replace knobs with levers, install push-button door openers, and adjust door tension to make them easier to open.

Bathroom Accessibility:

- * Ensure that all accessible bathrooms are free of transition barriers for individuals using mobility devices.

Accessible Picnic Areas:

- * Install accessible picnic tables with cement pads extending to accommodate mobility equipment.

Community Lighting:

- * Enhance lighting where needed to improve visibility to address accessibility for individuals with visual impairments, and overall public safety.

Whistle Cessation:

- * Reinvigorated advocacy for train whistle cessation.

AC Unit:

- * Consider installation of HVAC units at the Seniors Centre and Thrift Store.

3. Training

Scooter User Education:

- * Implement an education program for scooter users to ensure that all users understand the rules of the road and are equipped with appropriate safety gear.
- * Educate property owners and strata boards of their duty to ensure boulevards are not blocked to impede pedestrian and bike safety or impede sight lines.

4. Communication

Survey Participation Assistance:

- * Assist individuals with cognitive disabilities in participating in surveys to ensure their voices are heard.
- * Assistance for visually impaired individuals

Consultations:

- * Hold regular Accessibility Advisory Committee meetings to gather ongoing community feedback.
- * Implement an online platform for residents to report accessibility issues and suggest improvements.

Policies

- * Establish a policy for the Village mandating that all public documents be formatted for accessibility.

FEEDBACK MECHANISM

Residents can provide feedback on accessibility:

Online through the Village of Ashcroft website at www.ashcroftbc.ca

In person at the Village Office: **601 Bancroft Street.**

By mail: PO Box 129 Ashcroft BC V0K 1A0

By email: admin@ashcroftbc.ca



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DESIGN AND DELIVERY OF PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

- * **Timeline:** Develop a phased implementation plan with short-term (1-2 years), medium-term (3-5 years), and long-term (5+ years) goals upon completion of the Rick Hansen Foundation Assessment.
- * **Annual Reviews:** Conduct annual reviews of the accessibility plan to measure progress and make necessary adjustments.
- * **Community Feedback:** Collect ongoing feedback from residents through the established “feedback mechanism” analyze feedback received, identify new barriers and address them promptly.
- * **Collaboration with Experts:** Continue to work with accessibility experts like Sonja Gaudet or the Rick Hansen Foundation to identify and remove barriers.

CONCLUSION

The Village of Ashcroft is dedicated to fostering an inclusive community with equal access to public spaces and services. This Accessibility Plan outlines our commitment to ongoing improvements and proactive measures, guided by community feedback, to ensure a barrier-free environment for all residents and visitors.

This plan incorporates the valuable insights and recommendations from the community and experts, ensuring that the Village of Ashcroft is a welcoming place for all residents and visitors.

