

District of Squamish **Accessibility Plan**

For an accessible Squamish





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Acknowledgments

The District recognizes that Squamish is in the core unceded territory of Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw. We offer gratitude to the Skwxwú7mesh People who have lived on these lands since time immemorial and reassert our commitment to Truth and Reconciliation.

The District is grateful for the work and insights of the Accessibility Committee. Members of the Committee have worked tirelessly to guide the development of the engagement and the drafting of this plan. The District would also like to acknowledge that many Committee members hold unique perspectives as people with lived experiences of disability.

We are also grateful to the many community members who participated in the public engagement sessions as well as District staff who provided expertise. The conversations that were held and the comments that were collected all helped create this Accessibility Plan.

This plan has been created through the lens of the District of Squamish IDEA (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Accessibility) Committee which works to make the District of Squamish a place where all belong.



Executive Summary

The District of Squamish is committed to increasing accessibility across all its spaces, services, and communications.

Accessibility is a key component in many of the District's existing strategies and plans as well as ongoing or planned projects and initiatives.

Guided by the Accessible BC Act, the District of Squamish created an Accessibility Committee and developed an Accessibility Plan to identify and remove barriers to accessibility. In this process, the District worked extensively with staff and members of the Accessibility Committee, developed relationships with people with disabilities, and engaged with community members. The resulting feedback informed the development of this Accessibility Plan, which was created in collaboration with staff and members of the District of Squamish Accessibility Committee.

¹ In recognition of varied preference for both person-first and identity-first language, this plan uses both terms interchangeably. Please see the Introduction for more. Person first refers to "person with a disability" and identity-first includes examples like "disabled person", or "autistic person", or "Deaf person".



The plan is organized according to the following domains:

- Built Environment and Public Spaces
- Transportation
- Communications and Information Design
- Governance and Corporate Culture
- Service Design and Delivery
- Employment

Each domain features goals and objectives that work towards the vision of an accessible Squamish, where everyone is included without experiencing barriers to access.

Feedback on this plan, and on accessibility at the District of Squamish more generally, is welcome.

Please email accessibility@squamish.ca or contact Municipal Hall at 604.892.5217.



Introduction

Why Accessibility

Disability is more common than many think, with approximately one in four people over the age of 15 in Canada living with one or more disabilities. There is evidence of care for disabled people throughout human history and, in many Indigenous societies, being disabled did not necessarily lead to marginalization. With colonial settlement however, environments and societies were often built with the assumption that all citizens were able-bodied. This history has led to a situation where accessibility barriers exist throughout Canadian society and there is a need to identify and dismantle those barriers to allow disabled people to fully participate. Canada now has a strong legislative framework to protect people with disabilities from discrimination, including the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Canadian Human Rights Act.



Accessibility B.C. Act

The Accessible British Columbia Act was enacted in 2021, and in 2022 the Accessible British Columbia Regulation came into effect. The Regulation requires prescribed organizations, such as the District of Squamish, to:

- Create an Accessibility Committee to help identify barriers and advise on the removal or prevention of such barriers
- Develop an Accessibility Plan to identify, remove, and prevent barriers which will be updated every 3 years
- Establish a process for receiving comments from the public on the Plan and barriers

The deadline to comply with the Accessible B.C. Act was September 1, 2023.

Under the Act, an organization's Accessibility Plan must consider a set of principles. These are outlined below with a description of how they relate to the District of Squamish Accessibility Plan.



Inclusion

Making sure everyone belongs and can participate.

The District of Squamish Accessibility Committee consists of people with lived experience of disability. Committee meetings and community engagement activities provided diverse opportunities, methods, and accommodations for participation to include everyone.

Adaptability

Ability to be adjusted or retrofitted as circumstances change.

Many of the strategic goals in this plan further adaptability by ensuring multiple options or flexibility such as contact via email and phone, adapted programming and housing options, and others

Diversity

Representing a wide variety of orientations, perspectives, or experiences

The Accessibility Committee includes members with a wide variety of disabilities and other social identities, and the resulting Accessibility Plan considers many disabilities and types of barriers across the District of Squamish.

Collaboration

Working together to achieve a common goal

The Accessibility Plan was developed in collaboration with the District of Squamish Accessibility Committee, staff, and community members through the community engagement strategy



Self-determination

Each person can make their own decisions and manage their own lives

As a crucial aspect of disability justice, self-determination is evident in the inclusion of disabled voices throughout the development of this plan.

Universal Design

As much as possible, ensuring environments and products are designed in a way that all people can use them without the need for adaptation.

Where possible, this plan seeks to align with other District of Squamish plans and strategies and views accessibility as one aspect of equity. Universal Design is referenced through various visions and strategic goals.



Nothing About Us Without Us

During the negotiations to create the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the International Disability Caucus adopted the slogan “nothing about us without us”. The phrase has since become a rallying cry for many communities but is widely regarded as originating in disability movements.

“Nothing about us without us” highlights the importance of including disabled voices in any planning or policy decisions that might affect accessibility. It aligns with a social model of disability, which sees disability arising from an ableist society as opposed to a medical model of disability, which focuses on the individual as abnormal.

Medical model of disability

This model locates disability in the person themselves, as a direct result of their impairment or difference. In this model, disabled people are seen as deficient or abnormal and in need of aid or a cure.

Social model of disability

This model sees disability as being caused by the way society is organized. For example, a lack of ramps or closed captioning is disabling, not the fact that someone uses a wheelchair or is Deaf.



In addition, the terms used to discuss disability have significant meaning which may change over time. Person-first language highlights the person before the disability and is used by many governments and organizations as a general practice. Examples of person-first language include “person with a disability” or “people with disabilities”. However, many disabled people prefer identity-first language to recognize how their disability forms an integral part of their social identities. This includes phrases like “disabled person”, “Autistic person”, or “Deaf person” and others. In addition, the term disabled has often been replaced with euphemisms. Examples include “differently abled”, “special needs”, “handicapped”, and others. Many disability activists actively resist these phrases and embrace the word “disability” as a term that accurately reflects their experiences in an ableist society. These patterns are also evident in other identity categories, such as Deafhood, Autism, neurodivergence, and others. Many of these are being recognized as distinct cultural groups.

In recognition of the diversity of disabled perspectives and “nothing about us without us”, this Accessibility Plan alternates between person-first language, like “people with disabilities”, and identity-first language, like “disabled people”. This supports the principle of self-determination by intentionally including and acknowledging both preferences. Where appropriate, this plan also recognizes disabled communities as cultures by capitalizing words, such as deaf versus Deaf.

An Accessible Squamish

During the community engagement, participants were asked to consider the following questions: What do you think of when you hear the word accessibility? What does an accessible Squamish mean to you?

The responses to these questions were analyzed separately using the Quirkos qualitative software. The results generated the word cloud included below.

Respondents highlighted that every person should be able to access what they need without experiencing barriers. In addition, disabled people should feel included and not othered (as one respondent put it, “inclusion is belonging that goes beyond acceptance”). Some respondents expanded the idea of accessibility to include protection of land and cultural activities and others focused on the idea of welcoming all people.

As a result of this process, the District of Squamish Accessibility Plan includes the following vision:

The District of Squamish provides spaces, services, and communications that allow everyone to be included **without experiencing barriers to access**.

The vision for an accessible Squamish is included in the Accessibility Plan as a guide for its implementation, to ensure all people are welcomed and feel a sense of belonging.

everyone
included
needs
clean
able
job
feel
without
complete
people
access
barriers
workplace
other
others



Community Context

Sḵw̓xwú7mesh Territory

The District of Squamish is situated on the unceded, traditional territory of the Sḵw̓xwú7mesh Úxwumixw at the end of Átl'ka7tsem/ Howe Sound. Within the District of Squamish boundaries there are eight Squamish Nation Reserves, many of which represent permanent or seasonal village sites. The history of Sḵw̓xwú7mesh Úxwumixw goes back millennia and Sḵw̓xwú7mesh culture, customs, traditions, and laws are deeply connected to the lands, waters, and beings of this territory and are passed on through generations

Sḵw̓xwú7mesh Úxwumixw has existed as a political entity since its amalgamation in 1923, although the history of Sḵw̓xwú7mesh people and land go back millennia. Sḵw̓xwú7mesh sníchim (Squamish language) is part of the Coast Salish family of languages and is undergoing revitalization efforts to strengthen the number of speakers. An elected Council, or Nexwsxwníw ntm ta Úxwumixw, governs the nation through one Chairperson, seven Councillors, a Band Manager, and the Nation Administration. The Nation consist of just over 4,000 members who live throughout the territory, including Squamish and the Squamish Valley.

Sḵw̓xwú7mesh Úxwumixw and the District of Squamish continue to deepen their relationship founded in respect and recognition of Indigenous rights, culture, and heritage.

Community Profile

Squamish is a growing and increasingly diverse community. From 2016 to 2021, the population grew 22% to 23,819. Like many other communities, the cost of living has increased dramatically as well and many residents commute to work in neighbouring communities like Vancouver and Whistler. English and French are the most spoken languages followed by Punjabi, German, Spanish, and Tagalog/Filipino. There is a high value placed on the natural environment and Squamish is known as the “Adventure capital of Canada”. The community boasts a large selection of outdoor amenities such as trails and parks and is a prime tourist destination for mountain bikers, rock climbers, and other outdoor sports enthusiasts. Squamish also has a vibrant arts and culture community and a growing culinary scene.



Commitment to Accessibility

Squamish 2040

The Squamish 2040 – Official Community Plan (OCP) was adopted in 2018 and outlines a community vision as well as strategies to help us get there. Among the goals of the OCP, health is articulated as including accessible built environments, housing and support for active living and universal mobility. In this way, “Squamish’s most vulnerable citizens are cared for with dignity and respect, and suitable facilities and services are available for residents of all ages, stages of life, abilities, incomes, interests, and cultures”

Many of the strategies outlined in the OCP include explicit mention of accessibility as a principle and objective.

District of Squamish Strategic Plan

The District of Squamish Strategic Plan 2023-2026 was adopted in 2023. There are many elements of the plan related to accessibility, including the inclusion of accessibility as a governing principle.

Under the pillar “Resilient People and Relationships”, the Strategic Plan seeks to “incorporate the principles of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility throughout our organization with the goal to foster these principles in the greater community and support community groups in their work”. This includes the implementation of the District’s Inclusion Strategy (discussed below).

The pillar “Connected and Liveable Community” outlines actions to increase the accessibility of arts, cultural, heritage and recreational multiuse programmable spaces as well as active transportation and transit systems.

Under “Reliable Service Delivery”, the Strategic Plan commits to “equitable, accessible, transparent, and culturally appropriate services”



District of Squamish Inclusion Strategy

In 2022, the District of Squamish Inclusion Strategy: IDEAs in Action was endorsed by Mayor and Council. The Strategy outlines five goals for improving inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility in District workplaces and processes. The Strategy was developed by the IDEA (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Access) Committee which recognizes accessibility as a core element in diversity, equity, and inclusion work.

The Inclusion Strategy's fifth goal is "Our physical and virtual work environments are accessible and inclusive". Actions listed to achieve this goal include the development of this Accessibility Plan and the implementation of many of the plan's actions.

What are we Already Doing?

The District of Squamish is currently advancing a variety of projects and initiatives that seek to mitigate barriers to accessibility across the organization. Below is a list of some of these.

- Accessibility awareness training and resources for staff
- Inclusive and accessible emergency support services training workshops
- Assessment of curbside collection through an accessibility and equity lens
- Addition of closed captioning to all videos and live meetings in Council Chambers
- Prioritization of accessibility in projects such as the Xwu'nekw Park Sea Dike
- Development of Transportation Master Plan through an accessibility and equity lens
- Social Procurement Policy with a focus on equity and social value



Goals and Objectives

The following Goals and Objectives are organized according to various domains which consider the breadth of the services, facilities, and communications provided by the District of Squamish. Each domain includes a summary of the community engagement feedback followed by overarching goals and objectives. The domains include:

- Built Environment and Public Spaces
- Transportation
- Communications and Information Design
- Governance and Corporate Culture
- Service Design and Delivery
- Employment

The goals outlined in this plan are guided by the vision of an accessible Squamish:

The District of Squamish provides spaces, services, and communications that allow everyone to be included without experiencing barriers to access.



Built Environment and Public Spaces

What we heard

Public engagement identified barriers related to parks and public spaces. These include a general lack of accessible playground spaces for children with disabilities, as well as equipment that cannot be reached with mobility devices and equipment that does not support play for neurodivergent children or those using mobility devices. In addition, some public amenities were identified as being inaccessible and there is a general lack of accessible washrooms around town.

In District facilities, barriers identified include lack of ramps, automatic doors, limited space, and a general lack of accessibility considerations or outdated accommodations in the design process. Participants identified the need for more accessible parking that is well maintained and clearly marked and enforced. Feedback also identified a lack of adequate affordable housing that is accessible.

Streetscapes also had many barriers such as a lack of tactile and visible markers, challenges with accessible parking, and sidewalk slopes and grades.

Goal 1:

Built Environment and Public Spaces

There is an increased availability of park and public space amenities that are accessible or support accessibility needs.

Objectives:

1. Conduct a review of municipal parks to assess accessibility, including amenities, wayfinding, and surrounding areas such as parking. Develop a prioritization process for accessibility upgrades.
2. Create accessibility standards for new municipal park development which include consideration of the spectrum of disabilities and differences, including sensory, physical, neurodivergence, mental illness, and others, to ensure any new park and public space amenities are accessible or include accessibility features.
3. Create awareness of accessibility features that are currently available at parks through public advertising and signage.
4. Update the Parks, Recreation and Culture Master plan using an accessibility scope and lens.
5. Retrofit existing park and public space amenities to be more accessible. This might include accessible benches, shelters, water fountains, bathrooms, alternative modes of communication on signage such as ASL illustrations, pictographs, or braille and others.

Goal 2:

Built Environment and Public Spaces

Increased accessibility at existing District and Library facilities.

Objectives:

1. Conduct an accessibility audit of all facilities through a third-party consultant including identification of immediate and long-term infrastructure updates and resources required. This includes all washrooms, changerooms, and recreation amenities, such as pools and arenas.
2. Include short-term retrofits and infrastructure updates into budget cycle.
3. Integrate larger accessibility retrofits and infrastructure updates into long term capital planning.
4. Update the Real Estate and Facilities Masterplan with an accessibility lens.

Goal 3:

Built Environment and Public Spaces

New District facilities will be designed and built according to universal design principles.

Objectives

1. Ensure new facilities go beyond the BC Building Code and consider accessibility as a core design principle. To achieve this, create standardized language to include accessibility considerations in District specifications and procurement evaluation criteria where applicable.
2. Review Procurement Policy for accessibility gaps and update as required.
3. Develop a policy outlining inclusive requirements for all District facilities.
4. Update the Real Estate and Facilities Masterplan with an accessibility lens.

Goal 4:

Built Environment and Public Spaces

District streetscapes are accessible, including adequate accessible parking.

Objectives:

1. Launch a public awareness campaign about the District's Sidewalk and Maintenance policy, highlighting how the public can contribute to the maintenance of sidewalk amenities (e.g. identifying degraded sidewalk areas).
2. Develop a framework for engagement with seniors and people with disabilities to identify accessibility barriers such as problem areas in existing and proposed streetscapes and parking and other concerns.
3. Develop a prioritization process for accessibility upgrades of existing streetscapes with new budget and staff support.
4. Review number, location, and design of accessible on street parking and prioritize new locations and upgrades.
5. Create an accessibility component to streetscape guidelines which will be referenced in the Subdivision Development Control Bylaw (2649) for any new development projects.
6. Review and Update the Subdivision Development Control Bylaw (2649) for accessibility considerations. Include people with lived experience of disability in these reviews.
7. Review and Update the Building Bylaw (1822) for accessibility considerations. Include people with lived experience of disability in these reviews.

Goal 5:

Built Environment and Public Spaces

New housing and commercial developments include universal design.

Objectives

1. Review and revise adaptable/accessible unit policy in the OCP (2500) in both policy and development permit guidelines to integrate accessibility review in rezonings and development permit applications.
2. Consider policy that supports more accessible, affordable units.
3. Support the Squamish Community Housing Society and other community housing organizations in the design and build out of universally accessible housing within the community.
4. Review and revise accessible regulations in the Zoning Bylaw (2200), including off-street parking, to meet or exceed best practices.





Transportation

What we heard

Transportation barriers identified through public outreach include a lack of accessibility and maintenance of sidewalks with examples such as curb cuts, visual aids, width, grades, and potholes, among others, as well as gaps in the sidewalk network.

In terms of transit, respondents identified a lack of accessible services and routes, including HandyDART offerings. Bus stops are often not accessible to those using mobility aids and a lack of regional transit was also identified as a barrier.

Goal 1:

Transportation

Pedestrian transportation networks are accessible, including sidewalks, crosswalks, and trails.

Objectives:

1. Create a public accessibility layer on the District GIS webmap with opportunities for feedback. Include accessibility information pertaining to trail materials, grade, and others in new and existing signage.
2. Update trails mapping with an accessibility lens. This could include developing an accessibility rating standard for trails.
3. Ensure new sidewalks prioritize accessibility and that the sidewalk network is continuous and accessible. Work with other levels of government to examine crossing times at Highway 99 intersections.
4. Adopt a standard for accessible crosswalks with audible and tactile indicators as well as adequately placed push buttons.
5. Increase enforcement of parking infringements that create accessibility barriers, such as overhang onto sidewalks.
6. Collaborate with governments and local organizations to improve the accessibility of trails.
7. Install resting areas on existing trails and build rest stops into future trail planning.

Goal 2:

Transportation

Bike networks are accessible.

Objectives:

1. Develop a wide range of cycle routes and advertise alternate routes so travelers have a variety of options, including paved, flat, quiet, and others.
2. Improve visibility and signage for multiple users of shared paths, including mobility scooters, wheelchairs, adaptive bikes, and others.



Goal 3:

Transportation

Transit networks and infrastructure are accessible

Objectives:

1. Increase HandyDART service and ticket purchasing options.
2. Include more seating, larger and better shelters with space for wheelchairs and strollers at transit stops.
3. Prioritize accessible transit stops close to seniors' areas as well as supportive housing for vulnerable populations.
4. Work with Squamish Nation to assess priorities for increased transit service to reserve lands.
5. Conduct feasibility review of adjusting transit schedules to align with District recreational programming.
6. Continue advocating for regional transit.
7. Support implementation of any recommendations related to accessibility outlined in the Transportation Masterplan.



Communications and Information Design

What we heard

Participants identified a general lack of accessibility on the District's website with recreation schedules difficult to navigate in particular. In terms of content, some accessibility information was reported lacking or incorrect and the Squamish "Hardwired for Adventure" brand was identified as not inclusive. Respondents also suggested providing multiple options for contacting and engaging with the District and commended the District for the engagement work on this Accessibility Plan.

Goal 1:

Communications and Information Design

All District of Squamish communications, including the Library, meet WCAG 2.1 standards, including websites, documents, and social media posts..

Objectives:

1. Conduct an accessibility audit of all District and Library websites, including code and content updates, staff training, and ongoing review, maintenance, and reporting to ensure website design is compliant with WebAIM standards.
2. Ensure information is presented in a variety of formats including audible and in print and that all videos include subtitles where possible or captioning.
3. Advocate that third party providers make their platforms and software accessible.

Goal 2:

Communications and Information Design

People with disabilities are visible in Squamish and information is updated, clear, and accurate.

Objectives:

1. Ensure information on accessibility is available, accurate, and inclusive of all disabilities. This includes information about accessible parking and curb cuts, wayfinding, website compliance, accessible programming, captioning, and other things.
2. Support events that destigmatize disability and celebrate accessibility.
3. Ensure there are multiple options for contact and that this is clear and consistent across departments. This includes webforms, email, phone, in person, video chat, and others.
4. Advertise accessible programming in more formats, beyond social media and newsletters.
5. Update marketing and promotion to be more inclusive of people with disabilities. Examples include representation of disabled people in stock images on District websites and documents and other places.
6. Create an internal accessibility layer on the District GIS Webmap to document a baseline of accessibility attributes through existing infrastructure inspection programs. Create a plan for improving accessibility infrastructure that can inform future projects.
7. Continue to explore opportunities for open data and provide public information related to accessibility using the Open Data Guiding Principles.

Goal 3:

Communications and Information Design

Public engagement methods and materials are accessible and inclusive.

Objectives:

1. Ensure the District and Library offer a variety of formats for getting feedback such as webforms, email, phone, in person, and other formats and in languages other than English.
2. Ensure engagement platforms are accessible.





Governance and Corporate Culture

What we heard

Barriers that respondents identified in relation to governance and corporate culture include a general lack of accessibility considerations during decision-making and project planning. This included specific projects such as emergency planning and events. Many policies and bylaws were also identified as being out of date or excluding accessibility as a component. In addition, staff identified a lack of support for accessibility initiatives and standards from higher levels of government.

Goal 1:

Governance and Corporate Culture

Accessibility is a requirement of the District's policies, bylaws, and decision-making.

Objectives:

1. Include an accessibility lens on Reports to Council.
2. In concert with the District of Squamish Inclusion Strategy, conduct an accessibility audit of all bylaws and policies as they come up for review and include enforcement resources.
3. Research the possibility of providing compensation to all equity-seeking groups, including people with disabilities, for serving on District committees and advisory boards
4. Review the new accessibility standards published by Accessibility Standards Canada and the CSA Group, specifically the Accessible Design for the Built Environment, and review how other municipalities are codifying these standards into their own policies and bylaws.

Goal 2:

Governance and Corporate Culture

The District is a leader in collaborating and advocating for accessibility support.

Objectives:

1. Advocate to the Provincial Government to upgrade standards and regulations for accessibility and ensure the District participates in these processes where possible. Examples include Provincial Building Code updates and others.
2. Advocate to the Provincial and Federal governments for support and funding for accessibility initiatives, including those identified in this plan.
3. Ensure prioritized recommendations are considered for inclusion in the 5 year Financial Plan, including provisions for grant fund matching requirements.
4. Meet with the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction at the Union of BC Municipalities 2023 to advocate for accessibility implementation support for local governments.
5. Participate in or develop networks with other local governments to collaborate on accessibility. This would include participation in the Municipal Accessibility Network, Sea to Sky, and others.
6. Develop an action strategy for implementation of this Accessibility Plan which articulates:
 - a. actions that can be completed internally with existing budget allowances
 - b. actions that require external funding
 - c. opportunities for collaboration with community organizations
 - d. priorities and responsibilities over a 10 year timeline.
7. Fund a staff position to lead and manage the implementation of the Accessibility Plan.

Goal 3:

Governance and Corporate Culture

Accessibility is a consideration in emergency management.

Objectives:

1. Increase awareness of and embed accessibility into emergency response, considering issues like vulnerability during heat and smoke events, accessible reception centres and others.
2. Continue to partner on emergency response with Squamish Nation.



Service Design and Delivery

What we heard

When it comes to service design and delivery, respondents identified a general lack of awareness from District staff about disabilities. Participants suggested the District provide training to staff who work with people with disabilities. In addition, many respondents said recreational programming was not accessible and cost prohibitive, especially for children with disabilities or cognitive differences. This includes a lack of programming for neurodivergent individuals, however respondents also acknowledged the benefits of some programs such as Neurofit and the low sensory skate.

Goal 1:

Service Design and Delivery

District and Library staff exhibit accessibility awareness and competency.

Objectives:

1. Provide awareness raising and communication training for all staff from disabled tutors/organizations or representatives from cultural groups such as deafness and sign language, neurodivergence, and others.
2. Support staff who pursue accessibility training as part of their professional development.



Goal 2:

Service Design and Delivery

District and Library programming, activities and events are accessible and inclusive, especially for children and youth.

Objectives:

1. Continue to partner with outside organizations and neurodivergent people to increase offerings of programs that are innovative and culturally safe. This might include adaptive swim lessons, maker space, parallel play, science/technology/engineering/math classes, relationship building and others.
2. Increase sensory friendly events for people who have sensitivities to things like noise, light, smells, and others.
3. Support a wider variety of accessible and adaptive sports such as adaptive skating, adaptive biking and others.
4. Increase the variety of accessible programs for children and offer adequate after school and summer program spaces for children with disabilities. Include accessible equipment in existing programming such as Little Sneakers and others.
5. Implement a service level change to advance and support the increased delivery of accessible program design and services.
6. Encourage all permitted events to have an accessibility plan during the event planning process.
7. Consider providing accessibility training for community members, including sign language and disability awareness.
8. Review the Recreation Access Pass with an accessibility lens.

Employment

What we heard

District staff, as well as Mayor and Council, were surveyed for feedback on accessibility barriers. In terms of employment, respondents identified a lack of general awareness of disabilities and accommodations as well as inaccessible workspaces and facilities.

Goal 1:

Employment

The District is an accessible and inclusive workplace.

Objectives:

1. Support universal design principles for employee workspaces in new building or current building renovations by
 - a. Ensuring accessibility features are available by default as much as possible including live captioning, screen reader friendly documents and others.
 - b. Ensuring staff workplaces and workstations are accessible by default including automated doors, washrooms, elevators, adjustable workstations, lighting adjustments and other features.
2. Establish a written and transparent accommodation process that outlines how employees can request accommodations and how decisions and approvals are made within a social model of disability by
 - a. Providing virtual and in-person training with supervisors and managers about the accommodation process.
 - b. Providing information about accommodation requests and the decision process during recruitment and for current employees
 - c. Establishing a resources area, such as a physical info board and online space, and providing regular updates for supervisors, managers and employees about workplace accessibility and accommodation process.
3. Provide accessibility awareness training to all staff including psychological safety training for leadership. Work with unions to promote and champion accessibility improvements.



Feedback Tools

Engagement Summary

District staff developed a broad and targeted engagement strategy to gather feedback on accessibility guided by the Accessibility Committee. The committee identified intended participants and provided feedback on how to make the engagement opportunities as accessible as possible.

Engagement participants identified by the Accessibility Committee included:

- People with mobility challenges
- People with sensory disabilities
- Seniors
- Low-income people with disabilities
- People with developmental and cognitive disabilities
- Youth with disabilities
- People with chronic illnesses
- People with invisible or hidden disabilities
- HandyDART users
- District staff and departments
- Current and future District staff with disabilities

During April-May 2023, the following engagements were conducted:

Let's Talk Squamish:

online public survey and mapping tool, as well as

Frequently Asked Questions and staff contact information.

In-person Feedback:

printed maps at four District facilities and Squamish Farmers Market where participants could identify barriers as well as comment boxes with an accessibility question available in English, Punjabi, Spanish, German, and Tagalog/Filipino.

Public Focus Groups:

offered in person and online at wheelchair-accessible District facilities, a senior housing complex, and a youth centre.

Staff Survey:

launched internally online in alignment with the Let's Talk Squamish page.

Staff In-person Feedback:

comment boxes in five District staff facilities.

Staff Information Sessions:

provided online as well as in-person at

various team meetings.

Squamish Nation Feedback:

in-person lunch with Squamish Nation Elders.

Council Feedback:

online survey and one on one meetings with Mayor and Council as requested.

Interviews:

with members of the public and staff as necessary.


Rollabout:

Committee members and relevant staff attended in-person tours of District facilities and public spaces to gather information about barriers.

Scrollabout:

Committee members and relevant staff attended online tours of District websites to gather information about barriers.

Over 750 comments were collected from community and committee members,



District staff, and Council. Staff then coded the comments using the Quirkos analytical software according to the domains determined by the Accessibility Committee and outlined in this plan. Once coded, staff identified consistent themes, barriers, and proposed solutions. Barriers and solutions were then reviewed with relevant District staff in an iterative process to develop overarching goals and objectives grounded in staff expertise. Finally, the draft strategy and actions, as well as the plan outline, were reviewed and validated with the Accessibility Committee to ensure disabled voices were included. Feedback was incorporated into the final version of this plan.

In order to retain specific and detailed feedback, staff also coded the comments according to each relevant District of Squamish department. This information was then prepared and sent to staff to incorporate into work plans.

In the fall of 2023, engagement gaps related to mental illness were identified and staff worked with community members to collect feedback in early 2024. The Accessibility Plan was updated in consultation with Committee and community members. Staff will continue to engage with community members whose voices haven't been heard. Examples include culturally marginalized communities, unhoused community members, and those living with mental illness, among others.

Committee Activities

The District of Squamish Accessibility Committee was formed in January 2023 and met periodically from January-June to guide the development of the Plan. The committee is made up of both community members and staff, many of whom live with one or more disabilities. The Accessibility Committee provided input for a Terms of Reference, draft plan framework, engagement strategy, and the final District of Squamish Accessibility Plan.

Staff also worked with disabled committee members to develop and continuously update accessible meeting practices which include the use of captioning, accessible washroom facilities, virtual meeting options, and early sharing of meeting documents. The final preparation of this plan was completed by District staff, some of whom identify as living with disabilities.

After the adoption of this plan, the Accessibility Committee continued to meet regularly and provide guidance and feedback on its implementation.

Ways to Stay Engaged

As required by the Accessible BC Act, the District of Squamish plans to develop tools to invite feedback on the Accessibility Plan as well as accessibility within the District of Squamish more generally. This will include an option on the District of Squamish website to submit feedback online. As implementation of this plan continues, more avenues for feedback will be developed.

If you have feedback on the District of Squamish Accessibility Plan, or about accessibility in Squamish more generally, please email: accessibility@squamish.ca

You can also phone Municipal Hall at 604.892.5217 or send a letter to:

Equity and Inclusion Advisor
District of Squamish
37955 Second Avenue, Squamish, B.C. V8B 0A3

Definitions

The Accessibility Committee recognizes that terminology related to accessibility and disability is varied and evolving. Where possible, we use definitions provided by the BC Government while acknowledging that the meaning of these words may be different for some people.

Ableism: bias, discrimination, or prejudice against disabled people which considers them less valuable than able-bodied people.

Accessibility: when all people can take part in their communities through work, play, and other daily activities .

ASL: American Sign Language, one of the languages of the Deaf community in Canada and the United States.

In order to be more inclusive of people who may use ASL to communicate, we are including a resource developed by a local Deaf educator as a reference during emergencies. This resource is being integrated into District first response planning and we are grateful to Christina Cox of ASL Snapshots for its use.

Barrier: anything that hinders the full and equal participation in society of a person with an impairment. Barriers can be caused by environments, attitudes, practices, policies, information, communications, or technologies, and affected by intersecting forms of discrimination.

Disability: an inability to participate fully and equally in society as a result of the interaction of an impairment or difference and a barrier.

Hidden or Invisible Disability: a disability that is not apparent or visible. Examples include chronic and mental illness..

Identity First Language: Identity First Language: wording that places the disability at the beginning of the phrase or in the form of an adjective. An example is “Deaf person”.

Impairment: a physical, sensory, mental, intellectual, or cognitive diminishment or loss of function, whether permanent, temporary, or episodic.

Neurodivergence: a mind that functions in ways that are significantly different from what dominant society deems “normal”.

Person First Language: Person First Language: wording that places the person before the disability. And example is “person with a disability”.

Sensory disability: impairments that affect the senses, such as sight, hearing, smell, touch, or taste.

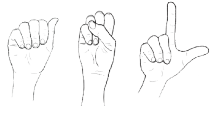
Universal Design: designing products and environments to be used by as many people as possible without the need for adaptation. Includes 7 principles :

1. **Equitable Use:** useful for people with diverse abilities
2. **Flexibility in Use:** accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities
3. **Simple and Intuitive use:** easy to understand, regardless of experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level
4. **Perceptible Information:** communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user’s sensory abilities
5. **Tolerance for Error:** minimizes hazards and adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions
6. **Low Physical Effort:** can be use efficiently and comfortably and with a minimum of fatigue.



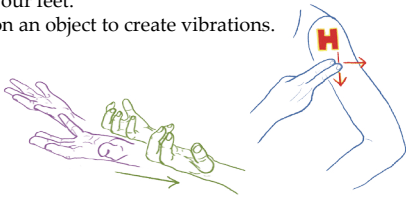
EMERGENCY

ASL



Visual and tactile ways to get someone's attention

- Tap their shoulder.
- Wave your hands.
- Stomp your feet.
- Pound on an object to create vibrations.



WANT HOSPITAL?

YES

NO

CALL 911



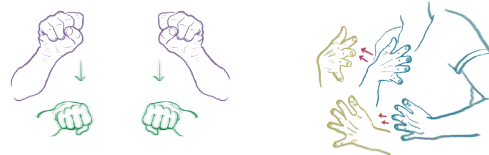
NEED HELP

Turn it into a Yes/No question by raising your eyebrows.



HURT?

SAFE?



CAN BREATHE?

When asking a question, "you" is implied by looking at the person.

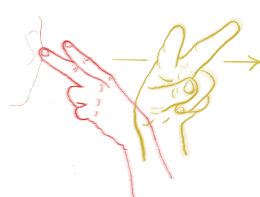


HURT WHERE?

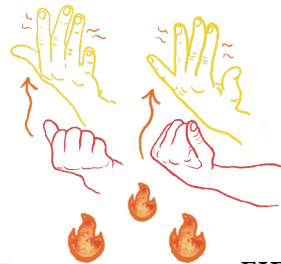
Furrow your eyebrows downwards with WH-question at the end.



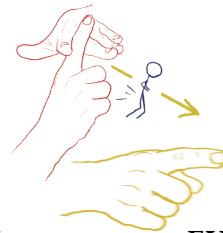
DANGER



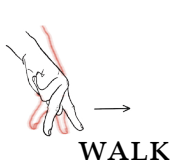
WATCH-OUT



FIRE



EVACUATE



WALK



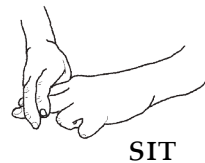
FOLLOW



STOP



STAY



SIT



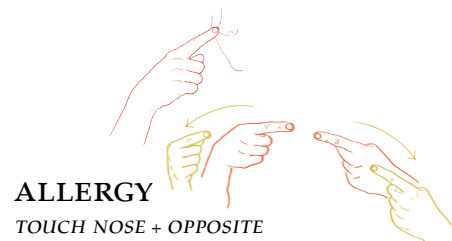
REST



MEDICAL
KIT



BLEED



ALLERGY

TOUCH NOSE + OPPOSITE

