



# ALBERNI-CLAYOQUOT REGIONAL DISTRICT ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

The ACRD Accessibility Plan was developed by Left Turn Right Turn Ltd,  
in partnership with the Accessibility Committee and ACRD staff.  
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# Introduction

## 1 About the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District

The Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District (ACRD; Regional District) is situated in the heart of Vancouver Island with one of the most dramatic and majestic landscapes. The ACRD is a federation consisting of member Municipalities. These members include Port Alberni, Tofino, Ucluelet, Treaty First Nations Huu-ay-aht, Yuułuʔiłʔatḥ, Uchucklesaht Tribe Government and Toquaht Nation, and six electoral areas. The six electoral areas are "A" (Bamfield), "B" (Beaufort), "C" (Long Beach), "D" (Sproat Lake), "E" (Beaver Creek) and "F" (Cherry Creek). The Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District is within the traditional territory of ten First Nations including the four treaty Nations mentioned above and Ahousaht First Nation, Ditidaht First Nation, Hesquiaht First Nation, Hupacasath First Nation, Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation, and Tseshaht First Nation.

Established in 1966, the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District provides services to their member jurisdictions. As service providers, the Regional District serves three distinct roles:

- Local government to the six electoral areas, including responsibility for providing basic local services. These services include community planning, water supply, and fire protection.
- Inter-jurisdictional service body. ACRD provides sub-regional services to different combinations of municipalities, electoral areas, and First Nations.
- Important regional services and undertaking key activities on behalf of the entire region.

The Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District is proud to begin the work of advancing accessibility for people with disabilities and look forward to this journey to becoming a more inclusive space for all people.

## 2 About the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District Accessibility Committee

The Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District Accessibility Committee (Accessibility Committee) was formed in 2024 in accordance with the Accessible British Columbia Act (Accessible BC Act).

The Accessibility Committee supports the Regional District and the City of Port Alberni in developing Accessibility Plans and to outline actions and strategies to identify, remove, and prevent barriers faced by people with disabilities. It will work cooperatively to advance accessibility options throughout the region. The Committee is made up of nine voting members, including one council member for the City of Port Alberni appointed by the Council, one ACRD director appointed by the Board, and seven individuals: who have lived experience of disabilities, support those with disabilities, and/or who identify as Indigenous. The committee members serve for a three-year term.

More information about the Committee can be found on [its webpage ACRD Accessibility Advisory Committee](#).

### 3 About the Accessible British Columbia Act

The Accessible BC Act was passed into law in June 2021. The Act's goal is to remove barriers to accessibility for British Columbians with disabilities. The Accessible BC Act applies to public sector organizations including municipalities and regional districts. Organizations must establish an accessibility committee, write an accessibility plan, and develop a process for receiving feedback on accessibility. Accessibility standards will be developed by the Provincial Accessibility Committee with more specific requirements affecting employment, transportation, the built environment, health, education, and procurement. From May to July of this year, the Province of British Columbia is engaging individuals, organizations, and industry groups within BC to solicit feedback and input on the draft Accessible Service Delivery and Employment Accessibility standards under the Accessible BC Act.

The Accessible BC Act complements other legislation in BC such as the BC Building Code, the Employment Standards Act, the Workers Compensation Act, Human Rights Code, and the Community Charter.

The Accessible BC Act directs us to consider the following principles when crafting our Accessibility Plan:

**Self-determination:** the recognition that people with disabilities are in charge of their own lives and determining their own needs and priorities. All accessibility work must stem from this.

**Universal Design:** A design principle which holds that spaces, processes, or tools should be welcoming and usable to anyone who accesses them. Rather than retrofitted for accessibility or requiring accommodations, these things should be designed in such a way that there are no barriers to usability for anyone.

**Inclusion:** Ensuring that all people, including those with disabilities, can access and are included in the operations of a regulated entity.

**Adaptability:** Ensuring that published Accessibility Plans and the goals contained therein are adaptable to the needs and priorities of people with disabilities. These may be subject to change based on people with disabilities, evolving priorities of people with disabilities, the emergence of new technologies, or a change in operations of the regulated entity.

**Diversity:** The measurable representation or presence of differences in lived experience (e.g., race, sexuality, age, gender, ability) within a group. In the context of the Accessible BC Act we understand diversity in reference to the range of disabilities in a community and the various intersecting identities that those communities have.

**Collaboration:** The recognition that people with disabilities are the experts on their own needs and experiences and that any work being done to support accessibility must be done in collaboration with them. People with disabilities are the most knowledgeable about accessibility and the most impacted by barriers to accessibility. Collaboration is key.

## 4 Definitions

The following words and definitions are good to keep in mind when reading this Accessibility Plan.

**Disability:** An inability to participate fully and equally in society because of the interaction of an impairment and a barrier.

**Impairment:** An impairment can be a physical, sensory, mental, intellectual, or cognitive impairment-whether permanent, temporary, or episodic.

**Accommodation:** The employer's responsibility under the Human Rights Code to adapt the workplace to meet the needs of the individual employee.

**Accessibility:** Accessibility involves developing laws, standards, and practices that remove barriers and support persons with disabilities to live with dignity and to meaningfully participate in their own communities.

## 5 Feedback

Improving accessibility for people with disabilities improves the experience of all members of our community and creates a district open to all those who wish to live here. We are committed to continuous improvement around accessibility and look forward to working in partnership with our community members with disabilities, our federation member municipalities, First Nations, and members of the public to improve our shared experiences in this place.

The ACRD and the City of Port Alberni want to know the specific barriers that people with disabilities face when trying to access programs, facilities, employment opportunities, general information, services, and/or support. We invite you to describe your experiences and their impact and make recommendations for improvement through our [online feedback form](#). You can also let us know about the things we are doing right that have the biggest impact on increasing accessibility. It all helps us be a more accessible region.

Accessibility Feedback direct link: [www.acrd.bc.ca/accessibility](http://www.acrd.bc.ca/accessibility)

## 6 Our Accessibility Commitment

The ACRD is committed to creating a region that is welcoming, inclusive, free of barriers, and accessible to all. The ACRD is committed to removing barriers to accessibility for people with

disabilities and working collaboratively with the regions disability community to ensure this work is done in the spirit of “nothing about us, without us”.

## 7 Our Accessibility Plan

This Accessibility Plan outlines how the Regional District will improve and continue its efforts to remove barriers and increase awareness of disability and accessibility. The plan covers the accessibility of our services, employment, emergency services, information and communications, transportation, buildings, infrastructure, and public spaces, public education and awareness, and procurement. The goals below outline how we will accomplish improvements to accessibility in our region.

## Services

**Accommodations Policies, External:** We will develop an accessibility policy and process for ACRD events and activities that are open to community members, e.g. board and committee meetings, open houses, community meetings, etc. We will ensure that the process includes a description of all regularly exercised accessibility practices (e.g. the ability to join a session virtually; auto captions enabled for virtual sessions) and make clear if/what accommodations are available to the public outside of regularly implemented accessibility features. We will include clear instructions for seeking accommodations, as well as timelines to fulfill accommodations.

**Events and Activities:** We will develop and implement an accessible events checklist or guidance document for both ACRD staff involved in public event planning, as well as for use by local community groups, non-profit, and for-profit businesses and organizations who host events in the community (e.g. displaying engagement materials at appropriate heights). We will ensure this resource is free to use, well-advertised, and easy to find or access by relevant user groups (e.g. a dedicated tab or page on the ACRD website.)

**Resources:** We will investigate the cost for increasing accessibility of public events and meetings (e.g., better live streaming equipment that facilitates accessibility; hearing induction loops; high quality microphones). We will consider allocating future budget for the procurement and implementation of these resources.

**Community Feedback:** We will review the ACRD accessibility feedback form on the ACRD website to ensure it is accessible (e.g. written in plain language; compatible with screen readers, etc.). We will ensure there is a method for tracking, responding to, and actioning feedback. We will consider allocating future budget for the procurement and implementation of these resources.

**Budgets:** We will include budget line item(s) that will allow the ACRD to support the Accessibility Committee, as well as to budget for accessibility initiatives that have been prioritized on an annual basis. We will review and apply for grant opportunities for high-cost initiatives as well as for staff training.

**Services and Assessments:** We will review current processes for completing ACRD assessments (e.g. Childcare Needs Assessment) and drafting plans (e.g.

Official Community Plans, Parks & Trail Plans) to better consider and incorporate the unique needs of people with disabilities.

## Employment

**Accommodations Policies, Internal:** We will develop a comprehensive accessibility accommodations policy and process for ACRD employees. Ensure that the policy and process:

- Reflects best practices and legal requirements
- Has clear guidance on timelines for fulfillment of accommodations (if any)
- Outlines expectations for both employee and employer

Includes clearly designated process owners for the accommodations process

**Training and Awareness:** We will source and deliver practical training on accessibility to all employees. In addition, identify learning needs and deliver training specific to job requirements. For example, accessible customer service training for people interacting with community members, accessible engineering standards (e.g. trail standards) for those involved in infrastructure development; etc. This training is intended to reduce attitudinal barriers across the ACRD broadly, as well as better equip staff to incorporate accessibility into their specific job functions.

**Recruitment and Hiring:** We will conduct an accessibility review of recruitment, hiring, and onboarding processes for ACRD jobs.

**Consulting:** We will develop and implement a mechanism to gather the perspectives and experiences of employees with disabilities about accessibility across the ACRD's operations. This should be a mechanism that protects their confidentiality but also allows for meaningful discussion. Ensure there is a method for recording, responding to, and/or actioning this feedback.

## Emergency Planning

**Emergency Planning:** We will incorporate accessibility into emergency planning public education campaigns including how residents and visitors with disabilities can access emergency services and how neighbours can support fellow residents with disabilities in the event of an emergency, as well as about the importance of visual and auditory alarms in key spaces. Also important is educating community members about what role those with disabilities play in their own emergency preparedness. We will review and update emergency



plans and include provisions for supporting people with disabilities in an emergency.

## Information and Communications

**Guidance:** We will include accessibility as part of ACRD communications and engagement policies. We will include guidance on:

- Accessibility best practices for social media communications (e.g. alternative text, camel case hashtags, plain language, video captions)
- Website accessibility (e.g. Let's Connect page)
- Creating accessible documents shared internally with employees (e.g. presentations and meeting agendas), and public facing documents such as Official Community Plans, and online resources.
- Newsletters and forms
- Language and tone used to speak to/ about people with disabilities (e.g. speaking TO people, not just ABOUT them).

And we will ensure that when updating or developing these policies that consideration is given to both accessible formats and accessible and inclusive channels of dissemination.

**Language:** We will continue efforts to revise high priority public communications (e.g. public website) into plainer language. We will begin drafting all new communications, both public and internal, in plainer language. We will support these efforts with guidance on plain language best practices, as well as with training for relevant staff on how to write in plain language effectively.

**Websites:** We will conduct a digital accessibility audit of public websites. Incorporate feedback from these audits when we're making updates and improvements. We will also complete this audit when updating the websites or creating digital tools like online payment systems for residents.

**Training:** We will source training on accessible communications best practices and have relevant staff complete training. Training may be related to social media best practices (e.g. alternative text, closed captions, camel case hashtags); writing in plain language; sourcing and providing alternative format documents upon request; creating digitally accessible documents and resources, etc.

**Meetings:** We will develop guidelines for meeting accessibility, both for in-person and virtual meetings. We will consider all-staff training on meeting

accessibility, including how to use virtual meeting platforms in accessible ways, how to provide accommodations in meetings, and how to prepare and circulate accessible meeting materials.

**Dissemination:** We will develop relationships with service provider and stakeholder organizations and leverage the existing relationship with the accessibility advisory committee to help disseminate relevant communications to ensure that important and relevant information is reaching residents with disabilities including through the use of video messaging. We will ensure that the methods of communication are accessible and inclusive (e.g. older populations with lower tech literacy may prefer in-person or print communications).

**Formatting:** We will explore the cost of providing publicly available documents in multiple formats (e.g. braille, large print, American Sign Language (ASL)) upon request. We will source vendors to fulfill these services and prioritize disability organizations who offer these services.

## Transportation

**Prioritizing accessibility:** When planning transportation projects, we will ensure accessibility is a key consideration. This can be captured through works in progress where accessibility has already been included, such as Active Transportation Plans and Parks and Trails Plans. We will prioritize plans that address known accessibility barriers or provide significant upgrades to accessibility and increased safety.

**Involving People with disabilities:** We will explore ways to involve people with disabilities in the planning and design of transportation-related projects.

**Sourcing Expertise:** We will source vendors with expertise and experience designing and building accessible spaces by including accessibility as a project parameter in Request for Proposals (RFPs).

**Knowledge Building:** We will source and implement training for relevant transportation staff (e.g. accessible customer service for transportation service providers.)

**Expanding Service:** We will continue to liaise with BC Transit to determine ways to fill gaps and expand both conventional and custom transit (i.e. BC handyDART) service for all.

**Airport Accessibility:** We will identify short and long-term accessibility improvements to the airport terminals. We will identify and apply improvement funding sources to understand which standards are applicable to meet or exceed best practices in accessibility. Accessibility is being considered in the Long Beach Airport update discussions that are taking place.

## Buildings, Infrastructure, and Public Spaces

**Assessing for Accessibility:** We will review all ACRD operated public sites for accessibility barriers. Note the status of accessibility and establish a priority list for addressing barriers. See on-site report and determine which locations need a closer technical inspection based on priority and determine what low-cost changes can be made more rapid prior to larger budget discussions.

**Planning for accessibility:** When making plans for renovations, updates, or construction of ACRD buildings and facilities, we will prioritize accessibility from the earliest planning stages. We will consult with people with disabilities in the planning and design of these spaces and investigate and pursue grant opportunities to support infrastructure work.

**Planning framework:** We will develop a standard process for staff involved with designing new ACRD buildings, facilities, and public spaces, including when and how to integrate accessibility in planning and projects.

**Signage:** When updating or replacing non-regulatory ACRD signage (e.g. recreational signage; information about public bathrooms), we will integrate accessibility features into new designs. Accessibility features include things like plain language, easy-to-read font, visual cues, and tactile signage. We will include information that describes the level of accessibility and types of accessibility features present in the space.

**Closing Gaps:** For the ACRD office, we will prioritize making high priority accessibility improvements. In particular, we will seek and apply for funding or allocate budget to improve the accessibility of the front entrance, accessible parking, path of travel to entrance, and signage.

**Planned and future improvements:** We will consider which public spaces are due for maintenance, renovation, or replacement. We will make plans to incorporate accessibility improvements into those changes. We will start with no/low-cost changes being explored like signage and consider what changes

can be made during routine maintenance of public spaces (e.g. switching pathway materials from wood chips to gravel or crushed stone).

**Mitigate impact:** For spaces that are known to be inaccessible and are important spaces in the community (e.g. the firehall), but which are not due for renovation or replacement, we will make plans to reduce gaps and maximize the accessibility of that space. For example, accessible parking signage and exterior pop-up voting spaces.

## Procurement

**Policies:** We will update procurement policies to incorporate accessibility considerations where applicable, for example when are where accessibility considerations should be applicable, and to what extent. We will consider including accessibility statements into the social procurement section of Request for Proposals.

**Guidance:** We will develop guidelines for procuring items related to accommodation needs, for example ergonomic office furniture, adaptive devices, or assistive software. This guideline document will be developed in concert with the accommodations policy under the Employment section of these recommendations. The document will make it clear who is involved with the process, how an accommodations request for procurable items is made, approved, and fulfilled, how items are chosen, and the timelines for fulfillment in procuring those items.

## Increasing Awareness and Reducing Attitudinal Barriers

**Public education and awareness:** We will develop and launch a public education campaign on accessibility in the ACRD aimed at both residents and the business community. The campaign will include information on why this is important to the ACRD, how the ACRD is taking action on accessibility (i.e. through this Plan and the Accessibility Advisory Committee) and how community members can engage with the ACRD about accessibility (e.g. through our established feedback mechanism). This campaign could include social media messaging, dedicated webpages, columns in local newspapers, and postering. The purpose of the campaign is to raise awareness around

accessibility, reduce attitudinal barriers regarding disability and provide a forum for public engagement.

## 8 Consultations

In the development of our Accessibility Plan we consulted regularly with the Accessibility Committee. Over the course of four meetings, the Committee provided feedback to us at various points throughout this project. Including feedback about the public engagement strategy, barriers to accessibility, and the actions that make up our Accessibility Plan.

We also consulted with members of the public through an online survey that was posted on our website, shared on social media, newspaper article, newspaper advertisements, community newsletters and board member updates. Much of the feedback was regarding the accessibility of our physical built environment and transportation such as sidewalks, parking lots and spaces, intersections, and the availability of public transportation. Community members also highlighted barriers in our parks and recreation facilities, barriers in accessible customer service practices, and knowledge of disability and accessibility amongst staff employed by the region. We received a total of 108 responses to this survey, 59 respondents identified as a person with a disability or as being close to someone with a disability. Lastly, we held six working sessions with staff from both the ACRD and the City of Port Alberni to workshop and align the goals and solutions presented in this plan.

We wish to express our sincere thanks to the members of the Accessibility Committee and to the community members who participated in this consultation process and for sharing their insight, experience, and expertise with the Region.

## 9 Monitoring & Evaluation

The ACRD will review and reevaluate this Accessibility Plan every three years. The first full evaluation of this plan will begin early 2027.