

Inclusion & Accessibility

Inclusive communities ensure that everyone is welcome and able to participate in all facets of community life.

To be accessible, communities must consciously remove barriers to full participation for people with disabilities.



The word “community” implies belonging. Inclusion means that everyone belongs. Accessibility means removing barriers to inclusion for people with disabilities. One in ten adults under age 65 in BC has a disability and is more than twice as likely to live in poverty. The likelihood of incurring a disability increases with age, so as the population in BC ages, more people will face barriers to inclusion. Municipalities can choose to enhance community accessibility by considering initiatives along 5 themes: moving around, working, living, playing, and participation.

Accessible communities ensure that everyone can move around freely. Municipalities can use barrier-free design to ensure that people with disabilities are fully included.

Accessible workplaces increase employment for people with disabilities. Through the removal of barriers, people with disabilities can continue to be contributing members of their communities. Workplace efficiency is

often a positive outcome from hiring people with disabilities because the necessary physical adjustments to the workspace make it safer and more comfortable for staff, customers, and other visitors

People with disabilities require affordable homes to live in with the necessary supports for day-to-day living. Sometimes this is home care, physical adjustments such as ramps and support bars, or the addition of mobility aids throughout the neighbourhood, such as audio signals or Braille signage. Municipal governments can be a source of leadership, incentive, and financial support to make sure both the necessary supports as well as affordable housing exists.

Supporting the inclusion of people with disabilities into the arts and culture of a community can enrich an entire community. It's not just a matter of providing physical access to things like theatres (which also helps to include everyone, such as mothers with young children) but providing equal opportunity access to

“ Inclusion is a process as well as an outcome. Municipal governments can seek out diverse participation in civic dialogue. ”

specialized training programs and activities that can help people with disabilities maximize their talents, which in many cases provides additional income for people.

Civic participation and inclusion of people with disabilities, within local government planning processes and decisions is vital to ensure that the needs of people with disabilities are met. Inclusion is a process as well as an outcome. Municipal governments can seek out diverse participation in civic dialogue. Supporting the specific needs of people with disabilities invites more complete participation.

Inclusive communities benefit everyone and everyone needs to be included in building inclusive communities. Equity in opportunity and participation gives all community members a full range of choices. You can choose a municipal government that can bring various stakeholders and groups together, and provides leadership in inclusion and accessibility. ■

How would you encourage local businesses and services to increase their accessibility both to clients and employees?

What opportunities do you see to enhance public facilities such as parks and recreation centres, to accommodate people with disabilities?

Will you be designing and implementing an accessible community plan to ensure that physical and social barriers are removed for people with disabilities?

For More Information:

Abilities Foundation
www.abilities.ca

BC Coalition of People with Disabilities
www.bccpd.bc.ca

SPARC BC
www.sparc.bc.ca/access-awareness-day