Creston's Accessibility Plan



Accessing our Full Potential

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Territory Acknowledgement

The Town of Creston recognizes, acknowledges, and respects that the lands considered by this plan are located on the unceded traditional territory of the yaqan nu?kiy within the ktunaxa nations. Since time immemorial, the yaqan nu?kiy stewarded these lands. It is with gratitude that the Town of Creston plans on them.

Message from Leadership

As Mayor of the Town of Creston, I am proud to present our Accessibility Plan, a testament to our dedication to fostering an inclusive and supportive community. This plan represents a significant milestone in our ongoing efforts to create an inclusive community where all individuals can thrive.

Creston's Accessibility Plan is more than just a document; it is a commitment to removing barriers and enhancing the quality of life for all residents. It reflects our steadfast commitment to creating an environment where every individual has the opportunity to contribute and succeed.

I am confident that the actions outlined in this plan will significantly enhance the inclusivity and well-being of our community. I encourage everyone to approach the implementation of these measures with a genuine spirit of inclusiveness.

Together, we can build a community where accessibility is not just an aspiration but a reality for all.

Sincerely,

Mayor Arnold Deboon



Message from the Regional Accessibility Advisory Committee

As the Regional Accessibility Advisory Committee for the Regional District of Central Kootenay, we are excited to champion Creston's Accessibility Plan. Each member of our committee has a personal journey filled with accessibility triumphs and barriers.

Creston's Accessibility Plan is a step in the right direction, promoting inclusion and supporting all people's ability to participate fully in their environment. The plan illustrates the Town's commitment to ensuring that every individual, regardless of their abilities, has the opportunity to thrive and contribute fully within their community.

We are excited to see the actions presented in this plan. We encourage the Town to implement this plan with diligence, compassion, and empathy, knowing its positive impact on the community.

Together, we envision a community where accessible design is foundational and accessibility is a given right.

About this Document

This plan is intended to be an accessible document. The format of this plan is legible by screen readers, written in plain language, uses accessible font, and avoids colour to convey meaning. The terminology used throughout the document is intended to be inclusive. The Town of Creston recognizes that language evolves with changing best practices and ideologies. The Town of Creston is committed to continuous learning and will update terminology to reflect inclusionary practices.



Introduction

Making accessibility a priority in community planning has numerous benefits and, most importantly, ensures genuine inclusion in the community. Accessible design focuses on designing for people with diverse abilities. It also considers permanent, temporary, and situational challenges people may face throughout their lifetime. Accessible communities better serve seniors, families with young children, people carrying heavy loads, people with injuries, and people with disabilities.

Increasing accessibility allows all people to meaningfully participate in their communities. By developing accessibility standards for the built environment, service delivery, technology, and education, we can remove barriers and support inclusion, diversity, and self-determination.

About Creston

In 2021, Creston's population was approximately 5,583, with a median age of 57.6 years - 16 years older than the Canadian average. Those aged 60 and over account for 46% of the population. However, Creston's younger population is also growing. Between 2016 and 2021, there was a 16% increase in the children population (ages 0-19) and 10% for ages 20-34. These demographic trends underscore the importance of creating a community that supports all ages and abilities. It also presents challenges moving forward. A proportionally small working-age population can lead to declining productivity, higher labour costs, and limited economic growth opportunities. This impacts a community's ability to provide adequate services such as health care or work in labour intensive jobs as the aging population places greater pressure on these services.

Planning for Accessibility

This plan will be Creston's first Accessibility Plan. However, accessibility is a principle built into many Town of Creston plans. All plans are intended to work together to improve accessibility in all Town of Creston initiatives.

See Appendix A for a brief description of other Town of Creston Plans and how they support accessibility.

Using an Intersectional Accessibility Lens

This plan aims to apply an intersectional accessibility lens to identify actions that improve accessibility and inclusion throughout the community and within the organization. Looking at accessibility through an intersectional lens means putting disablism at the centre of the conversation and seeing how it connects with other types of discrimination. Each person's individual experiences impact how their disability affects them. Some examples of intersectionality include ageism, sexism, homophobia, classism, transphobia, ableism, and racism. Considering

intersectionality in accessibility helps us understand the different barriers people may face.

What are Barriers? (Accessible BC Act s. 2)

A barrier can be anything that hinders the full and equal participation in society of a person with an impairment. Some examples are:

Attitude

When people think and act based upon false ideas, like:

- Making decisions about people with disabilities without including them
- Not believing that a person with a disability can contribute to the workforce

Physical

When obstacles make access difficult, like:

- A washroom with an accessible stall but no automatic door opener
- Hosting a meeting in a space with no wheelchair access

Information or Communication

When communication methods do not reach people with disabilities, like:

- Using small print or not providing large-print versions of material
- Videos, events, or meetings that do not have closed captions

Systemic

When an organization's policies or procedures are not inclusive, like:

- Not providing an American Sign Language interpreter or closed captioning
- Requiring a driver's licence for a job when another form of transportation could be used

Technology

When people with disabilities can't access technology, like:

- Websites, documents, or databases that are not accessible for screen readers
- Website graphs and charts do not have text to explain them

Sensory

When lights, sounds, or smells prevent participation in the environment, like:

- Co-workers wearing perfume in the workplace
- Use of fluorescent lighting in the workplace



Framework Guiding Creston's Accessibility Plan

Accessible BC Act

The Accessible British Columbia Act came into effect in June 2021. In 2019, the Accessible BC Act underwent significant public engagement. There was a clear message:

"The legislation needs to be an important part of a broader accessibility strategy and that the goal is to help bring about and support cultural change" *Summary Report, pg. 26.*

The Act requires certain organizations, such as educational institutions, government bodies, and other public sectors, to make their organizations more accessible in terms of the services they provide and within the organizations themselves. The accessibility legislation intends to create an environment that is inclusive of all people.

Key components of the Act are:

- 1. Create a plan that identifies, removes, and prevents barriers;
- 2. Work with a Committee to advise the plan; and,
- 3. Develop a feedback tool that is always available for people to provide feedback on accessibility.

Creston's Accessibility Plan aligns with the *Accessible BC Act*, with the overarching goal of creating an inclusive municipality.

The accessibility plan

The accessibility plan must include the following principles (Accessible Act BC s. 11):

- a. **Inclusion:** All British Columbians, including persons with disabilities, should be able to participate fully and equally in their communities.
- b. **Adaptability:** Accessibility plans should reflect the evolving concepts of disability and accessibility, which change as services, technology, and attitudes change.
- c. **Diversity:** Every person is unique. People with disabilities are individuals with varied backgrounds. Individual characteristics, including race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and lived experience, greatly inform individuals' experiences. Accessibility plans should acknowledge the principle of intersectionality and diversity within the disability community.



- e. **Self-determination:** Accessibility plans should seek to empower people with disabilities to make their own choices and pursue the lives they wish to live.
- f. **Universal Design:** The Centre for Excellence in Universal Design defines Universal Design as "the design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood, and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability." An accessibility plan should be designed to meet the needs of all people who wish to interact with the Organization.

Creston's Accessibility Plan

This accessibility strategy will continue to evolve with changing best practices, funding, demographics, and legislative requirements. This plan aims to increase accessibility in Creston and the Town of Creston's capacity to become an accessible organization. Actions will be pursued as opportunities and resources are available. The Town of Creston will continue to look for opportunities to collaborate with and capitalize on resources from the Regional District of Central Kootenay, the Province, Federal Government, and accessibility organizations.

An accessibility committee

An Accessibility Committee must assist organizations in identifying barriers, advise on how to remove existing barriers, and prevent future barriers. The Committee should reflect the diversity of persons in BC, include at least one Indigenous person, and half of the members should be persons with disabilities, or represent an organization that supports persons with disabilities (Accessible Act BC s. 9).



Creston's Regional Accessibility Advisory Committee

The Regional Accessibility Advisory Committee was formed in collaboration with neighbouring municipalities and the Regional District of Central Kootenay. Participating municipalities are Nakusp, Silverton, Salmo, and Slocan. Forming a Regional Committee supported a diverse representation of Central Kootenay communities and people. The Regional Accessibility Advisory Committee provides input and direction to the RDCK and participating municipalities on the development of accessibility plans and establishing a process for receiving public comments throughout the region.

A tool to receive feedback on accessibility

Municipalities must provide a feedback tool to receive feedback on their Accessibility Plan and how accessible the organization is generally (Accessible Act BC s. 12).

Creston's Feedback Tool

The Town of Creston uses the following platforms to receive feedback on accessibility in Creston.

1. Let's Talk Creston

Let's Talk Creston is an online engagement platform. Creston residents are able to ask questions, provide comments, and use the community-mapping feature to identify barriers in the built environment. The page also includes resources on accessibility and appoints a Town of Creston Staff member to engage with community members on the page. The page will continue to remain active for ongoing feedback about accessibility.

https://letstalk.creston.ca/accessibility-plan

2. Email

Staff are available by email to answer questions and receive comments.

Natasha.ewashen@creston.ca

3. Phone

Dedicated staff to receive accessibility comments via phone.

250-428-2214 ext. 423

4. In-person appointments with Staff

For those who are not able to access or use technology to provide feedback, staff are available for in-person appointments.











Goals, Barriers, Actions

The following accessibility goals, barriers, and actions are specific to the Town of Creston. Goals, barriers, and actions are grouped into:

- 1. Buildings and Outdoor Spaces
- 2. Transportation
- 3. Community Support and Health Services
- 4. Respect and Inclusion
- 5. Communication and Information
- 6. Municipal Operations

What are Goals, Barriers, and Actions?

1. Goals

An over-arching statement that directs actions, underpinned by community ideals and Town of Creston policy direction.

2. Barriers

Anything that hinders the full and equal participation in society of a person.

3. Actions

Steps that can be taken to improve accessibility and inclusion over time.

Buildings and Outdoor Spaces

Goals

- Buildings and homes are designed and retrofitted to be safe, comfortable, durable, and flexible, efficiently meeting diverse and changing needs over the long term.
- All forms of the built environment, including parks, are accessible to people with all ability levels.
- Creston's streets are people-friendly, accessible, safe, visually appealing, and enjoyable, offering places for people to rest and interact with others.

Barriers

- Aging homes aren't retrofitted with accessibility in mind.
- Many commercial and institutional buildings were constructed before accessibility standards.
- Lack of accessibility requirements for residential construction.
- Lack of accessibility planning within public buildings and spaces e.g., links between entryways, washrooms, pathways, seating, and exits.



- Lack of paved and easy grade accessible trails.
- Incomplete sidewalk network.
- Lack of sensory-friendly places and events (e.g. quiet shopping hours, provision of noise cancelling headphones at hockey games).
- Lack of accessible wayfinding features.
- Lack of consistent road crossings let downs, audio cues, adequate crossing times.
- Lack of curb cutouts next to accessible parking stalls.

- 1. Facilitate and participate in an 'Accessibility Walk' led by individuals with diverse abilities.
- 2. Integrate accessibility into Creston's Housing Needs Report to assess the need for supportive housing for local neurodivergent adults and adults with cognitive and physical disabilities.
- 3. Increase public awareness of the Accessibility Retrofit Subsidy (BC Rebate for Accessible Home Adaptations), among others.
- 4. Develop a review system to audit buildings, public facilities, recreational parks/playgrounds, and trails to assess when repairs or upgrades are needed to maintain accessibility.
- 5. Develop a Parks Master Plan that includes sensory-friendly and neurodivergent-sensitive playground design guidelines.
- 6. Develop an 'Accessible Outdoor Space" map showcasing accessible amenities like parks, washrooms, and trails.
- 7. Provide an accessibility rating for Creston trails and indicate it at every trailhead.
- 8. Ensure that all signage, walkways, and equipment for parks, playgrounds, and recreational facilities are accessible to individuals with disabilities.
- 9. Identify yearly capital projects to increase accessible infrastructure.
- 10. Review accessibility guidelines in applicable Official Community Plan Development Permit Areas to ensure accessibility needs are being met.
- 11. Include physically accessible infrastructure in all parks.
- 12. Explore and establish incentive mechanisms and standards to guide housing development and renovations to meet the need for accessible housing.
- 13. Explore how to best enable accessible ground-level units in multiplexes or accessible elevators for above-ground-level units.
- 14. Advocate for changes to the Provincial and Federal Building Codes to improve accessibility infrastructure within single-family homes to support accessibility needs and aging-in-place.
- 15. Implement Creston's Multi-modal Transportation Plan accessibility upgrades.
- 16. Implement the Trails Master Plan.



Transportation

Goals

- Public transportation options are convenient, reliable, innovative, safe, affordable, and accessible, meeting the needs of residents and visitors.
- Creston is connected to the Valley, neighbouring communities, and non-local health services by affordable, convenient, comfortable, and accessible transportation options.

Barriers

- Lack of accessible taxis and other ride-share options.
- Lack of convenient and accessible public transportation.
- Lack of comfortable, sheltered, convenient bus stops.

- 1. Explore creating limited mobility parking stalls to accommodate those who do not qualify for an accessible parking space but may be experiencing a temporary disability, pregnancy, or who are carrying heavy loads.
- 2. Ensure all crosswalks and crossing points are equipped with audio and visual signals.
- 3. Upgrade bus stops and buses for universal accessibility, including adding more seating, outdoor shelters, landing pads for ramps and mobility devices, better connections to sidewalks and pathways, and audio cues on buses.
- 4. Make sure there is seating for people who need rest breaks along sidewalks and other pedestrian paths.
- 5. Develop and deliver an awareness campaign for snow removal contractors about the importance of snow removal in commercial areas, at pedestrian intersections and accessible parking areas.
- 6. Actively patrol accessible parking spaces for use by those without disabilities and enforce as required.
- 7. Assess accessible parking spaces to ensure stalls are in low-grade locations, connect to sidewalks and crosswalks, and consider neighbouring businesses (e.g. additional stalls implemented near pharmacies).
- 8. Establish public e-bike charging infrastructure.
- 9. Implement Creston's Multi-modal Transportation Plan.
- 10. Implement Creston's Trails Master Plan.



Community Support and Health Services

Goals

- The health needs of community members are met in a timely, convenient, and affordable manner.
- Frequently used healthcare services are offered locally, and non-local services can be accessed conveniently and affordably.
- An adequate, affordable, and nutritious supply of food is available year-round and is efficiently used, ensuring local food security, and minimizing waste.

Barriers

- Lack of easy access to a doctor.
- Lack of accessible parking near pharmacies.
- Minimal access to mental health services.
- Lack of housing for health care providers.
- Lack of grocery shopping and delivery programs for those with limited mobility.
- Lack of opportunities to 'age in place.'
- Lack of supportive housing, including a Men's Shelter.
- Lack of addiction support services.
- Aging population and lack of people of a young working age to provide supportive services.

- 1. Explore options to encourage employee housing.
- 2. Develop zoning regulations for shelters.
- 3. Work with partners to explore the need for development of dementia-related activities and recreation opportunities.
- 4. Continue to explore options to encourage family doctors to move to and practice in Creston.
- 5. Explore options to encourage nurses to move to Creston to support current health care needs and provide stronger support for additional care options such as Home Care.
- 6. Explore Sign Bylaw and Traffic Bylaw enforcement options to increase parking turnover rates near pharmacies, allowing for easier prescription drop-off and pick-up.
- 7. Advocate for and advertise personal service programs such as grocery shopping and delivery.
- 8. Consider reduced business licence fees for community support programs such as meal programs, cleaning services, snow removal, yard maintenance, and caregiver services.



Respect and Inclusion

Goals

- Creston has a strong sense of community and belonging, and everyone feels connected, respected, and included.
- Creston is an accessible community where all ages are valued, they have opportunities to participate, and there are meaningful connections between the generations.
- Opportunities for a diversity of arts, cultures, and heritage activities exist for all ages, incomes, and abilities.
- High-quality formal and informal educational offerings meet the needs of all ages, abilities and incomes and are offered locally or via convenient communications infrastructure.
- Diverse year-round recreation opportunities exist for all ages, abilities, and incomes.

Barriers

- Lack of visible allyship with equity-seeking groups within the Town of Creston.
- Continued need for Truth and Reconciliation action.
- Insufficient number of emergency call buttons and adult change stations in the washrooms.
- Lack of infant change tables in male washrooms.
- Lack of accessible washrooms that included a lowered sink to accommodate people using wheelchairs.
- Lack of gender-neutral washrooms.
- Lack of community events celebrating diversity.
- Lack of educational and professional opportunities that would allow more young adults to stay in Creston.

- 1. Develop a policy for remuneration to compensate volunteerism and the contribution of local knowledge to Town of Creston initiatives.
- 2. Encourage Creston Valley Tourism to provide up-to-date information about accessible and inclusive tourist accommodation providers and their inventory.
- 3. Conduct a community art project celebrating Creston's diversity.
- 4. Conduct a neighbourhood walk to identify spaces where people feel excluded or uncomfortable.
- 5. Work with the community to establish celebrations of diversity.
- 6. Update Creston's Bullying and Harassment Prevention Policy to reference the *Accessible BC Act.*
- 7. Ensure signage and wayfinding features represent Creston's many histories.
- 8. Develop an action plan to increase washroom accessibility and safety.



Communication and Information

Goals

- Town of Creston residents feel well-informed regardless of their age or ability.
- Visitors to Creston have the resources they need to completely experience what Creston has to offer.
- The Town delivers clear, concise, inclusive information that is easily understood by residents of varying abilities and language proficiency.
- The Town actively engages with marginalized groups to understand their unique needs.

Barriers

- High technology literacy divide.
- Lack of accessible content for visually impaired persons.
- Lack of multilingual information.
- Challenging to communicate technical information.
- Lack of trust between public and government.
- Lack of diverse representation of individuals who are developing and communicating information.

- 1. Create and communicate a feedback channel that allows people to report accessibility challenges related to municipal facilities, services, programs, events, and public spaces.
- 2. Include an 'Accessibility Lens' in the Citizen Satisfaction Survey.
- 3. Explore more accessible communication and engagement tools that can be used regularly or when needed by participants with disabilities.
- 4. Gather accessibility information during event registration so participant needs can be accommodated accordingly.
- 5. Research and implement conferencing software that provides automatic captioning.
- 6. Work with the Library and College to provide a program that teaches basic computer skills and improves technological literacy.
- 7. Research alternatives to PDF formats for straightforward screen reader interpretation.
- 8. Explore options for colour-blind software to identify incompatible colour pallets.
- 9. Provide training for staff on effective communication strategies.
- 10. Implement Creston's Communication Plan.



Municipal Operations

Goals

- The Town of Creston provides employment, entrepreneurial, and volunteer opportunities to people with a range of abilities.
- The Town of Creston creates plans and projects that increase equity.
- The Town of Creston successfully communicates information to all constituents.
- The Town prioritizes equal opportunity for all employees and Council members, regardless of gender, race, belief, or sexual orientation.

Barriers

- Limited knowledge base to create fully accessible documents.
- Limited knowledge base and funding to create fully accessible municipal infrastructure.
- Lack of relevant and current demographic data, including data on disability, which can help design better municipal programs and services.
- Limited understanding of barriers faced by marginalized groups.

- 1. Update the job-posting template to improve access for people with disabilities, including format, language level, a clear description of job requirements, and to identify whether adaptations are available.
- 2. Develop the forms/procedures to enable staff to conduct comprehensive and consistent assessments of municipal and public facilities, spaces, services, communications, and events and to consider applying accessibility best practices.
- 3. Provide staff training to assist all staff in understanding the diversity of disabilities.
- 4. Assess municipal and public facilities, spaces, services, communications, and events.
- 5. Compile information on all public washroom facilities and make it available to the public. The information should include hours of operation and the type of washroom (gender, universal, accessible, family, changing table, etc.).
- 6. Create accessible information on municipal programs, key facilities, accessible routes to Downtown from accessible parking.
- 7. Explore software options to assist staff in developing accessible documents, videos, and other content.
- 8. Consider changing the phone directory to a more accessible format.
- 9. Advocate to Statistics Canada for the provision of Canadian Survey on Disability Data at the census level.



- 10. Explore Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification for municipal facilities and public spaces such as pedestrian environments and parks.
- 11. Ensure public events accommodate and empower people with disabilities to attend.
- 12. Establish a "scent-free" workplace.
- 13. Consider opportunities for persons with disabilities to volunteer as a steppingstone to employment.

What's Next

An accessible community for people of all ages and abilities will positively affect everyone. This Accessibility Plan will be a living document. The Plan will be reviewed every three years to note completed actions, add new actions, and update terminology and best practices as they evolve. The Accessibility Feedback Tools will become an increasingly important resource used by the Town of Creston to update this Plan and continue to include accessibility as a pillar within all Town plans.

Thank you to the Regional Accessibility Advisory Committee

The Town of Creston would like to give a big thank you to the Regional Accessibility Advisory Committee. Your candour when providing examples of lived experiences, attention to detail, and thoughtful feedback created a strong foundation for this plan. Thank you for raising your voice and volunteering your time for this project.



Appendix A

Age Friendly Action Plan, 2013

The Town of Creston received funding for the Age-Friendly Action Plan through the 2012 Seniors' Housing and Support Initiative offered by the Union of British Columbia Municipalities and the Healthy Families BC program. The Age-Friendly Action Plan presents the key actions prioritized in 2012 by seniors and their service providers who identified and refined actions. Actions aim to move the Creston Valley forward on its journey to becoming a more age-friendly place. Creston's Accessibility Plan helps to close the loop on remaining actions within the Age-Friendly Action Plan.

Creston and Area Youth Engagement Strategy, 2015

The Youth Strategy and Action Plan is an important foundation for Creston and area planners, service providers, families, local businesses, and other organizations working with youth. The outcome of the community assessment was a Youth Strategy and Action Plan that provides a series of recommendations for a new, positive, and inspiring vision for youth. The Plan focuses on key themes that increase Creston's youths' ability to participate in the community fully.

Official Community Plan, 2017

The Official Community Plan speaks to creating a community that makes Creston experiences safe, accessible, and enjoyable for all residents and visitors. The Official Community Plan addresses accessibility in several ways, including supporting access to affordable housing, growing the locally based economy, increasing access to outdoor spaces, and improving the safety and accessibility of the built environment. To ensure accessibility is built into new private developments, Creston's Official Community Plan requires all buildings within development permit areas to be designed for Universal Accessibility.

Multi-modal Transportation Plan, 2022

The Multi-modal Transportation Plan includes construction standards and design guidelines for pedestrians, cycling, transit, road networks, and overall street design. The plan highlights accessibility barriers for active transportation. It outlines accessibility improvements using the "Universal Accessibility Design Toolbox" in BC's Active Transportation Design Guide. The BC Active Transportation Design Guide defines universal design as a built environment "accessible to people of all ages and abilities, regardless of any physical or cognitive impairment."



Downtown Revitalization Plan, 2023

The primary purpose of the Creston Downtown Revitalization Plan is to provide a vision and roadmap for future land use and urban design in Downtown Creston. The Revitalization Plan takes direction from key policies in the Official Community Plan. It aims to create a more walkable, mixed-use, vibrant Downtown with better public spaces, improved transportation options, and an accessible environment for all ages and abilities.

Housing Action Plan, 2023

The Housing Action Plan provides the Town of Creston with a series of recommended actions to address Creston residents' current challenge in obtaining affordable, secure, and healthy housing. Providing better access to safe and secure housing enables people of all ages and abilities to stay in their community and fully participate in their environment.

Trails Master Plan, 2023

The Trails Master Plan is the Town's long-term strategy for creating a connected and walkable community. The Trails Master Plan uses the National Disability Authority Universal Accessibility Design Standards and local, community-determined accessibility standards to improve accessibility for Creston's trails.

Climate Action Plan, 2024 (upcoming)

This plan works towards equitable climate action that generates environmental, economic, and health benefits for individuals, families, and businesses throughout the community. The Environmental Stewardship Plan focuses on equity and effectiveness, considering the unique challenges and opportunities such as the community's geography, electric grid, socioeconomics, history, and culture. The goal is to achieve meaningful greenhouse gas reductions while creating a more resilient and equitable community.

Parks Master Plan, 2024 (upcoming)

The Parks Master Plan aims to identify the strategic priorities that define the future direction, philosophy, policies, and actions for municipal parks. The Plan will include a detailed asset inventory, needs analysis, recommendations for future amenities and land acquisition, maintenance recommendations, prioritization and costing of key projects, trend identification, accessibility recommendations, reconciliation opportunities, and consideration of climate change.

