



We wish to acknowledge that the Village of Midway is on the non-treaty lands of the Okanagan Nation and the Osoyoos Indian Band

## **MIDWAY'S COMMITMENT TO ACCESSIBILITY.**

The Village of Midway is evolving and our understanding and capacity for accessibility is growing. New policies, strategies, and programs are being developed to create a connected and inclusive community. People with disabilities, among other equity-seeking groups, have not traditionally been included in planning and municipal service delivery processes. We must take positive steps to remove barriers, involve those with diverse perspectives and abilities, promote inclusion, and foster a positive and respectful community through actions and services.

The Village of Midway is committed to identifying, removing, and preventing barriers across its services, programs, and infrastructure, in order to benefit the community in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. We value contributions from all people and believe diversity strengthens our community. The Village of Midway recognizes the essential knowledge and perspectives of people with lived experience of disability and commits to making sure those voices are part of community planning.

We will also ensure staff and council are (1) aware of their roles in influencing accessibility for people with disabilities and (2) support positive community attitudes.

## **FOCUS AREAS**

The Accessibility Framework is categorized into three key focus areas:

1. **Built Environment:**  
Promoting accessibility in urban policy, design, planning, operations, and development.
2. **Governance and Services:**  
Removing barriers to and increasing participation in local government programs, services, information, bylaws, and public decision making.

### **3. Capacity and Collaboration:**

Developing increased corporate capacity to deliver professional services in a more accessible manner, building partnerships with accessibility service providers, and advocating to other levels of government and stakeholders for change.

***“By focusing on accessibility, we can directly improve the health, well-being, and personal outcomes for the people in our community.”***

Almost every Canadian has or will experience a disability, or cares about someone with accessibility challenges. Many of us will require supports at times throughout our lives. By focusing on accessibility, we can directly improve the health, well-being, and personal outcomes for the people in our community. This framework includes a set of goals, objectives, and directions that provide structure to support Village planning to create a high standard of accessibility across municipal services and programs, infrastructure, and projects.

Many programs, services, and infrastructure have been introduced over time, without full consideration of how these measures may affect people with different disabilities. This framework has been created to help guide the Village in accessibility planning and will be put into action by each department as part of everyday business and service delivery.

A new Accessibility Program will be established as part of the Village’s work on equity and inclusion and set into motion a series of actions that aim to prevent and remove barriers for people with disabilities. This program can be defined as the combination of resources, policy, guidelines, standards, directions, actions, tools, and information to deliver year-on-year accessibility improvements.

## **THE VILLAGE OF MIDWAY**

The Village of Midway is taking deliberate steps to make itself a more inclusive community. As part of these efforts, new policies, strategies, and programs are being developed to help nurture a connected and cohesive community that promotes well-being, belonging, resiliency, and vibrancy.

Midway commits to applying accessibility to all aspects of Village planning and operations, from our capital investments and municipal programs, to front-line services for residents and businesses.

This reinforces our commitment to accessibility and is part of an emerging, broader set of priorities and programs to support an inclusive, welcoming community. This will contribute to improved social health and well-being.

The Village believes that the definition of equity means treating everyone fairly by acknowledging their unique situation and addressing systemic barriers.

### **ACCESSIBILITY AS A PART OF EQUITY.**

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the BC Human Rights Code, and the courts recognize that no rights are absolute, and that a balance of competing interests is required. These laws guarantee rights such as freedom of expression and protection from discrimination and harassment based on gender identity or expression, ancestry, sexual orientation, and disability, among others. They require that all rights be given equal consideration. Our laws recognize that rights have limits in some situations, particularly where they substantially interfere with the rights of others. It is important to search for solutions to reconcile competing rights and accommodate individuals and groups. This can be challenging, controversial, and sometimes dissatisfying. However, it is a shared responsibility and will be made easier when we better understand the nature of one another's rights and obligations and show mutual respect for the dignity and worth of everyone involved.

Shifting our preconceptions, attitudes, and decision-making regarding disability requires careful self-examination, education, awareness, commitment, and planning. This framework focuses on a systematic and coordinated approach to reduce barriers in our community. We use data, lived experiences, best practices, and provincial legislation and guidance to understand community accessibility challenges and opportunities to support investment decisions that maximize positive outcomes.

***“The aim of equity is to ensure that everyone has access to equal benefits and outcomes.”***

Over the next several years, the Village will focus on accessibility programming and barrier reduction and prevention. Removing barriers from public places requires a structured approach to improve accessibility across infrastructure, programs, services, and information. The Village also has an important role to improve accessibility by helping foster a dialogue that recognizes we are a stronger and healthier community when no one is left out.

## **WHAT IS MEANT BY ACCESSIBILITY?**

“Accessibility” is a general term used to describe the degree of ease that something (e.g. device, service, place) can be used and enjoyed by people with disabilities. Accessibility requires conscious planning, design, and effort to ensure barriers are removed, and the environment is highly useable and practical for the general population. 1

The United Nations defines accessibility as “a precondition for an inclusive society for all and may be defined as the provision of flexibility to accommodate each user’s needs and preferences.” 2

The Accessible Canada Act defines disability as “a physical, mental, intellectual, learning, communication or sensory impairment—or a function limitation—whether permanent, temporary, or episodic in nature, that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders a person’s full and equal participation in society.” 3

The concept of accessible design ensures both “direct access” (i.e. unassisted) “indirect access” (i.e. compatibility with a person’s assistive technology, e.g., computer screen readers).

Accessibility can be accomplished by mainstream or Universal Design, which allows a person with a disability to use the same facility or service as everyone else (this is preferred), or with an alternative solution designed for people with disabilities.

***Accessibility requires  
conscious planning, design and effort.”***

## **ACCESSIBILITY VS ACCOMMODATION**

Sometimes people with disabilities require personal accommodations in situations where accessible systems or programs are not yet in place. “Accommodation” refers to the changes or modifications made to a system (e.g. a policy or practice) to meet the needs of a specific individual or group. Accommodations can be options to overcome any type of barriers within an existing system.4

Accommodations may be a reasonable approach for important, temporary improvements, and may also be an appropriate response to rare or infrequent accessibility issues. These instances should be carefully monitored and managed to ensure longer-term accessibility solutions are identified and developed wherever possible.5

Accommodation is not the same as accessibility, and accessibility is always preferable to accommodation. Accessible systems are designed at the outset to be usable by as many people as possible, regardless of ability. Accommodations may be proactive or reactive and may not effectively address everyone's needs. An accessible system would make sure the required functions / treatments were in place before being introduced. Removing barriers can be challenging and more expensive. In removing barriers, care should always be taken to avoid or minimize any unintended negative consequences for others.

## **UNDERSTANDING DISABILITY**

### **ENGAGING PEOPLE WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE.**

This will be the first step in the Village of Midway's accessibility plan.

A public engagement event needs to be held to pursue a deeper understanding of the issues, challenges, and priorities we face in creating an accessible village. We require face-to-face engagements, including workshops, meetings, and focus groups to learn, discuss, and explore key issues, ideas, and insights should be held.

Community members should be invited to provide feedback on accessibility challenges and priorities, both in writing and verbally.

The engagement sessions could involve local organizations, service providers, and people with lived experience including those with caring responsibilities.

### **TYPES OF DISABILITIES**

Different disability groupings are used to help provide a broad understanding of experiences that may be shared or related to a disability, in terms of underlying health conditions, activity limitations, participation restrictions, and environmental factors. Disabilities can be encountered at any age and can be temporary or long term. While there is no universally adopted set of disability groupings, it is important to recognize several common types and causes of disability. Some disabilities are visible while others are not immediately visible to others, such as asthma, brain injuries or concussions, allergies or environmental sensitivities, extreme fatigue, or chronic pain.

The following definitions are adapted from the World Health Organization (WHO) to help build awareness, but should not be interpreted as a complete list.

- **Pain:**  
Pain-related disabilities often refer to long term or complex pain that may be caused by injury and may commonly occur with other disabilities.
- **Flexibility, Mobility, and Dexterity:**  
Disabilities related to mobility, flexibility, and dexterity include limb disabilities, manual dexterity, coordination, brain injuries and spinal- cord function.
- **Mental Health:**  
Mental health-related disabilities refer to conditions that affect the mind and brain and the way a person thinks, feels, and acts.
- **Learning and Memory:**  
Learning and memory disabilities include challenges related to skills such as reading, writing, and problem solving. They can also interfere with more complex and abstract skills related to the ability to organize, to reason, long and short-term memory, and attention span.
- **Visual Disabilities:**  
Visual disabilities can range from partial sight loss to complete blindness.
- **Hearing:**  
Hearing disabilities can range from partial hearing loss to complete deafness.
- **Developmental:**  
Developmental disabilities are a diverse group of conditions resulting from physical or mental challenges that arise before adulthood. These conditions may create difficulties with language, mobility, learning, and independent living.
- **Other:**  
There are many other types of disabilities that may affect how a person lives their day-to-day life.

## **TYPES OF BARRIERS**

There are five general types of barriers.

1. **Attitudinal Barriers:**  
Behaviours, perceptions, and assumptions that discriminate against people with disabilities. These barriers often emerge from a lack of understanding, which can lead people to ignore, judge, or misunderstand those with disabilities. An example of how an attitude can contribute to discrimination is speaking to a person's assistant, rather than the person

with a disability, assuming that a person who cannot communicate in traditional ways cannot understand.

Employee sensitivity and inclusivity training such as to improve interpersonal skills for customer service is one way to address this type of barrier.

**2. Informational or Communication Barriers:**

When a person with a disability cannot easily receive and/or understand information that is available to others. An example of a communication barrier is when information is available only in audio or verbal format and is inaccessible to people with hearing loss. Ways of addressing this barrier include having sign language interpreters, closed captioning services, or written materials to accompany presentations.

**3. Technological Barriers:**

When technology does not meet the needs of people with disabilities. An example of this could be service computers at a library that are not accessible to people with sight loss. Ways of addressing this include providing computers with screen reader software and large print key labels.

**4. Physical or Architectural Barriers:**

Elements of buildings or outdoor spaces that create barriers. An example of this is utility poles placed in the sidewalk without adequate clearance for people using mobility scooters or wheelchairs to navigate. Ways of addressing this include retrofitting the built environment to create additional space and planning new routes without obstructions.

**5. Organizational or Systemic Barriers:**

Policies, procedures, or practices that may result in people with disabilities being mistreated or excluded from participating. An example of this is when people with disabilities are not included at public consultation events because of the location or format of the event. Ways of addressing this is updating communication guidelines and visual standards to increase accessibility of public documents through alternate formats.

***“Barriers often emerge from a lack of understanding, which can lead people to ignore, judge, or misunderstand those with disabilities.”***

The Village of Midway is committed to removing existing barriers and preventing the creation of new barriers through the application of this framework and its actions.

## **OUR COMMUNITY PROFILE**

The Village of Midway is located near the US border between Osoyoos and Grand Forks, BC. Midway is home to approximately 700 residents and supports additional people from across the region as a business, medical and tourism hub.

## **PREVALENCE OF DISABILITY IN OUR COMMUNITY**

The data on disability in Midway relies on Statistics Canada's census data for the Province and the 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability (CSD). The data in this section is taken from the CSD, which provides an important overall snapshot but is limited in its local details. The survey was completed by individuals aged 15 and over who in the 2016 Census "reported having a long-term condition or difficulty." This is the most recent official statistical information on disability in Canada and is available on a provincial and national basis.

The CSD is based on a "social model of disabilities," which in screening for disabilities requires a "limitation in daily activities." The CSD included questions on disability type and severity. There were 10 types of disabilities covered: seeing, hearing, mobility, flexibility, dexterity, pain-related, learning, developmental, mental health-related, and memory. The severity of the disabilities was based on the degree of difficulty (ranging from "no difficulty" to "cannot do at all") and frequency of daily activity limitation (from "rarely" to "always").

The CSD is currently available only at the provincial and national level. However, by using rates from the CSD (on presence of disabilities, types, and severity), we can develop an estimate of the number of individuals with disabilities in Midway based on our census data. These estimates provide a general understanding regarding the number of people with a disability in our community and the existing spectrum of disabilities.

Disability, of course, is contextual and related to multiple barriers. Therefore, it is important to avoid preconceptions about what a disability is. The data does not provide a detailed analysis, but provides the first insights on the accessibility needs within our Village, how prevalent they are, and what we can do to progressively remove barriers. There are more than 926,000 British Columbians over the age of 15 with some form of disability. This represents 25% of the population. As the population ages, the number of people with disabilities (and their severity) is likely to increase.

It is estimated that currently 175 individuals in the Village of Midway live with one or more disabilities. This is a conservative estimate as the median age in Midway is 62.8, higher than other communities. For example, the median age in nearby Rock Creek is 48.8, Greenwood is 61.6 and Trail is 49.6. (These figures



are from BC Community Health Data). As disabilities tend to rise with age, the number of people living with disabilities in Midway could be higher than the 25% figure suggested by the CSD. This affirms the need to start systematically reducing accessibility barriers now.

## **AGING AND DISABILITY**

With 20% of Canadians (25-64 years) reporting having a disability, compared with 38% of Canadian seniors aged 65 and older, it is clear that older populations will have higher rates of disability. While the overall level of disability increases with age, specific types of disability also become more common. According to the 2017 statistics, the disabilities reported by Canadians varied significantly by age with disabilities such as pain, flexibility, and mobility more than doubling for those 65 years and older.

## **DEVELOPING INSIGHTS FROM DATA**

Understanding the differences and commonality of disability types and groupings is critical when considering how and where the Village designs, prioritizes, and funds improvements. Understanding our community profile can help to refine areas of Village responsibility, where more attention is needed or where processes need to be in place to accommodate people with disabilities.

In the future, more accurate and detailed local accessibility information will help the Village better understand our specific accessibility challenges, needs, and priorities. This data needs to be addressed in the Village's multi-year action plan.

This framework aims to recognize the gaps and opportunities to improve accessibility throughout the Village of Midway. Thoughtful planning, meaningful engagement, training, and direct action will help deliver accessibility improvements in our community for decades to come.

All individuals have an inherent right to participate in a society where everyone is treated with dignity, given opportunity to participate, and provided access to their community so that they can fully contribute to society in their own unique way.

Depending on how they are planned and built, urban environments, infrastructure, facilities, and services can impede or enable access, participation, and inclusion for people.

An inclusive society provides opportunities for meaningful participation in society. An inclusive society fosters diversity, reduces social and economic isolation, and promotes mental and physical health and well-being.

Without inclusive opportunities, diversity may be scarce, and control over choice can be limited, reducing the ability for people with disabilities to make positive choices to their own lives.

As a community, we are richer with a diverse range of viewpoints and individual perspectives. Exclusion can lead to disadvantage and discrimination, which have far-reaching negative impacts across all aspects of life, including health, welfare, education, and employment. These impacts are felt beyond the individual, with families and the broader community all being negatively affected by a non-inclusive society. There is a strong economic imperative for increasing the inclusiveness of our society, to foster job opportunities that enhance the ability of people with disabilities to be independent and free from economic struggle.

**“Thoughtful planning, meaningful engagement, training, and direct action will help deliver accessibility improvements in our community for decades to come.”**

Almost every Canadian has or will experience a disability, or cares about someone with accessibility challenges. Many of us will require support at times throughout our lives. By valuing the importance of accessibility, we can directly improve the health, well-being and personal outcomes for the people in our community. As policies of inclusivity and accessibility are implemented thoughtfully and effectively, we can increase employment and education rates, alleviate poverty, and grow a sense of belonging—not just for individuals living with a disability, but for their families and loved ones, too.

People with disabilities deserve the opportunity to be actively involved in local government decision-making processes,

Inclusion enables participation by all, ensuring all voices are part of shaping a sustainable, healthy, and vibrant community.

### **THE VILLAGE OF MIDWAY’S ACCESSIBILITY COMMITMENT**

The Village’s accessibility commitment is a statement that shares our view and promise to the community regarding accessibility and inclusion for people with disabilities.

The Village of Midway is committed to identifying, preventing, and removing barriers across its services, programs, and infrastructure, in order to benefit the community in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities.

The Village of Midway values the contributions from all people and believes that diversity strengthens the community. We recognize the essential knowledge and perspectives of people with lived experience of disability and commit to making sure those voices are part of community planning and decisions.

The Village of Midway will ensure that staff and council are aware of their roles in influencing accessibility for people with disabilities and accept their responsibility to support positive community attitudes.

## **KEY PRINCIPLES**

The Village will adhere to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) core principles that underpin the rights of people with disabilities in combination with the emerging provincial principles on accessibility, as follows:

### **Inclusion:**

All people should be able to participate fully in our community with dignity and individual autonomy.

### **Diversity:**

All people will be respected for their differences and lived experiences, regardless of ability, age, gender identity and expression, race, sexual orientation, sex, ethnicity, place of origin, and religion. Our framework acknowledges that other aspects of identity interact with ability to determine how individuals experience barriers and inclusion.

### **Respect:**

All people should be treated with respect so that they can make their own choices, contribute to civil society, and thrive through independence.

### **Collaboration:**

While the Village does provide a leadership role, the Village cannot address accessibility alone. We must collaborate with other stakeholders, levels of government, agency partners, advocacy organizations, and service providers to eliminate barriers and support innovations towards an accessible society.

### **Adaptability:**

Disability and accessibility are evolving concepts that change as services, technology, and attitudes change.

## **THE VILLAGE’S ROLE**

The Community Charter and the Local Government Act are the legislative frameworks under which all British Columbian municipalities operate.

Under this context, Midway recognizes its local government responsibility to remove barriers across public spaces, programs, and services.

The key areas of responsibility that the Village can consider in its goal of identifying, removing, and preventing accessibility barriers include:

- **Public infrastructure**
- **Village programs and services**
- **Municipal information, regulations, and policies**

And the Village’s role, related to:

- **Leadership by example**
- **Advocacy and partnerships**

The Village will work within its jurisdictional authority to deliver accessibility improvements in the community, which aim to complement the actions of other regional agencies that play important roles in improving the outcomes for people with disabilities. Health authorities, regional and provincial governments, community associations, commercial and institutional enterprises, and non-profits all have a direct impact on the accessibility of programs, infrastructure, and supports across our community. The Village recognizes that strong leadership, collaboration, and coordination can help address accessibility challenges throughout our community.

The Village must increase its awareness and skills so that it can achieve higher standards in accessible design, programs, and service delivery. The following elements represent the nature of accessibility work required from the Village:

- **Capacity-building — Focused education and training:**  
Increasing staff awareness, skills, knowledge, and competencies will help guide accessibility improvements in design and service delivery.
- **Prevention — Introducing new accessibility design standards:**  
Design policies and standards for facilities, transportation, information, and services will help the Village better integrate accessibility requirements into design processes, avoiding the creation of barriers so that accessibility can be optimized alongside other project requirements.
- **Removal — Retroactive accessibility improvements:**  
Many barriers exist due to infrastructure, program and technology design and installation, implementation, decisions, and trade-offs made in the past.

- **Insights — Accessibility data and information:**  
Information related to the community profile, types of barriers, their prevalence, impact, and patterns will help the Village better manage priorities.
- **Planning — Prioritization and coordination:**  
Project planning and prioritization should occur in an integrated fashion with annual program budget cycles, and coordinate with other capital and operational investments and programs to take advantage of any and all synergy opportunities to maximize benefits. The Village must carefully balance a wide range of community interests, resources, and investments to achieve the required accessibility outcomes.

## **BALANCING NEEDS ACROSS COMMUNITY**

Planning and design of the Village infrastructure, programs, and services requires careful balancing of changing and often competing needs. Trade-offs are always part of the design process, and designers, project managers, and service providers must carefully balance safety, equity, security, affordability, sustainability, quality, time, cost, and other important requirements. Evaluation and prioritization of these variables is required to effectively manage risk. Often situations arise where compromises are required for many users to ensure the minimum acceptable needs are met for all. Processes and tools to manage these variables will be and will improve over time through the implementation of this framework.

Education and enforcement of the desired user behaviours are also important factors to ensure that infrastructure and programs function as intended. Having enhanced accessibility information, awareness, and creative approaches will help achieve better outcomes.

With accessibility requirements at the design table, the Village will be in a better position to balance community needs, remove systemic barriers, promote inclusion, and create a more positive and respectful community.

## **FOCUS AREAS**

The framework is broken down into three key Focus Areas, outlined below, which group our actions into core segments of accessibility work that closely align with the business and structure of Village work and planning. These Focus Areas embed goals and priorities across departments in the Village, and are strengthened by the action plan, contained in the appendix.

They are as follows:

- **Built Environment:**  
Promoting accessibility as a collective good and a key component in urban policy, design, planning, and development. This focus area includes the systematic reduction and prevention of physical barriers across transportation and mobility, public facilities, and public spaces.
- **Governance and Services:**  
Removing barriers and increasing participation in local government programs, services, information, bylaws, and public decision making.
- **Capacity and Collaboration:**  
Developing increased corporate capacity to deliver professional services in a more accessible manner. This includes partnerships and advocacy with other levels of government and community stakeholders. Collaborating with community partners can set a strong example for community accessibility attitudes and awareness.

Each of these focus areas is detailed below with goals and key objectives. Village services, infrastructure, and program design will rely on new lessons and tools that have been developed.

## **THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR INCLUSIVE SERVICES & SPACES**

A key approach for addressing accessibility is “Universal Design”. The concept of Universal Design was developed by a working group of architects, product designers, engineers, and environmental design researchers. The purpose is to guide the design of environments, products, and communications. The principles can be used to evaluate existing designs, guide the design process, and educate stakeholders about characteristics of more usable services, products, and environments.

- **Principle 1: Equitable Use:**  
The design is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities.
- **Principle 2: Flexibility in Use:**  
The design takes into account a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.
- **Principle 3: Simple and Intuitive Use:**  
Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user’s experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level.

- **Principle 4: Perceptible Information:**  
The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user’s sensory abilities.
- **Principle 5: Tolerance for Error:**  
The design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.
- **Principle 6: Low Physical Effort:**  
The design can be used efficiently and comfortably, with minimum fatigue.
- **Principle 7: Size and Space for Approach and Use:**  
Appropriate size and space is provided for approach, reach, manipulation, and use regardless of user’s body size, posture, or mobility.

Universal design principles can be applied to a variety of situations in the municipal context as well—for example, community recreation or arts programs, services at the Village Office, public consultation activities, or new infrastructure designs. Consideration of these principles in the development and ongoing management of Village services can support increased accessibility across our Village.

### **FOCUS AREA 1: BUILT ENVIRONMENT**

A liveable community enhances an individual’s independence, accommodates their needs, and fosters engagement in civic, economic, and social aspects of the community. People with disabilities can live more freely when the built environment is designed and/or modified to support their needs. Technology can also play a significant role in removing liveability barriers.

Creating liveable communities for people of all abilities is more than modifying the physical environment. It applies to activities, facilities, housing, road design, walkability, transportation, environmental sensitivities and supportive services, and creates opportunities for social connection, engagement, and well-being. Infrastructure investments will need to incorporate universal design principles for public spaces including buildings, open spaces, parks, playgrounds, plazas, and streetscapes. We will also need to continue to develop and apply design standards that align with industry and other municipal best practices.

### **TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY**

Mobility relates to the ease of moving, whereas accessibility may address the ease of reaching desired destinations. Planning for accessibility considers safer public and private transportation systems, and incorporates decisions related to rights

of way, land use, and development that reduce both barriers and the effort required to access important destinations and services.

## **BUILDINGS AND FACILITIES**

The Village current buildings and facilities include a community hall, arena, medical centre, pharmacy, library, museum with CPR train station & bunkhouse, seniors centre, golf clubhouse, municipal offices, fire hall and ambulance bays.

## **PARKS, OPEN SPACES AND PUBLIC PLAZAS**

The Village of Midway's parks, and open spaces are a vital piece of the Village's character, culture, and vibrancy. Serving residents and visitors alike, they offer important opportunities for socializing, recreation, relaxation, play, and learning as well as providing an opportunity to connect with nature. These spaces (both hardscape and softscape) are intended to contribute to quality of life for people of all ages and abilities.

## **WHAT WE NEED TO KNOW:**

Accessible public spaces such as village centres, pedestrian pathways, parks, recreation facilities, and public transit are important. The Village must engage stakeholders to identify areas in the Village with high standards of accessibility and areas where there were significant concerns. Examples of existing barriers could include a lack of wheelchair access to parks, lack of sidewalks, diverse playground equipment, designated places for mobility aid parking, access to accessible parking, public transit and taxis, and the overall need for improved design standards.

The Village of Midway's infrastructure represents years of varying design standards. This process provides an opportunity to innovate and rethink those standards in order to promote inclusive and accessible design while recognizing our history.

## **GOAL**

To systematically remove and prevent barriers in public parks, open spaces and Village-owned buildings and facilities.



## **Key Objectives:**

- To prevent and remove barriers from Village infrastructure and places, transportation infrastructure, facilities, parks, and open spaces.
- To evaluate and prioritize retrofits to existing Village infrastructure, buildings, and spaces to meet updated accessibility standards.
- To improve the availability and accessibility of transportation services, mobility options and parking infrastructure for people with disabilities.

## **ACTIONS TAKEN OR UNDERWAY**

- Planning a renovation of the existing community hall to make it fully accessible.
- Applying for grants to upgrade Midway Library with Universal Design features including power-operated doors and enhanced safety features.
- Building an accessible spray park.
- Construction in progress of an accessible bathroom in the park.

## **FOCUS AREA (2): GOVERNANCE AND SERVICES**

People with disabilities face multiple forms of barriers preventing full participation in local government activities, including accessing services, information, events, discussions, and engagements. Universal Design principles also translate to the focus area of government programs and services. Accessible government enables increased opportunity for participation in the system of municipal business and public life, so that people with disabilities can engage with matters that affect their own lives and their communities. These opportunities may include the right to vote, be elected, gain employment, participate in public affairs (including serving on advisory committees), and enjoy full access to Village services including the website, Village documents, and webcasting of council meetings. Participation is important to the Village because it helps the Village arrive at better decisions, informed by a diversity of voices within our community.

## **MUNICIPAL PROGRAMS, SERVICES, POLICIES, INFORMATION AND BYLAWS**

Municipal Planning for accessibility allows people with disabilities to take full advantage of municipal programs, services, and information. Through the review of existing services, bylaws, and information platforms and the consideration of

accessibility in new regulations and service planning, the Village can ensure that people with disabilities have more opportunities to participate.

## **MUNICIPAL DECISION MAKING**

Making it possible for people with disabilities to participate in government decision-making processes requires intentional efforts and resources to create a supportive environment for different needs. These efforts will allow all residents to engage more fully on matters that affect their own lives and communities.

## **WHAT WE NEED TO KNOW**

Public and stakeholder outreach is needed to fully identify barriers.

The most common barriers identified in other municipalities were the need for full access to Village Council meetings, the need for document formats suitable for those with sight loss, information for people with hearing loss, and making public information easily searchable and navigable via official websites. Making elections fully accessible for people with disabilities was identified as a critical goal. Improving access to information through technology and reviewing bylaws to reduce barriers were identified as important strategies to support access to municipal programs and services.

## **GOAL**

To provide all residents and visitors with equitable access to municipal programs, services, information, engagement opportunities, and the ability to exercise their statutory rights.

### **Key Objectives:**

- To increase customer service support across all Village public service counters to serve people with visible and non-visible disabilities.
- To increase offerings of recreational program opportunities for people with disabilities.
- To increase opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in Council decision-making processes, Village engagement activities, Village-led special events and/or ceremonies.
- To improve accessibility of municipal election processes.
- To consider accessibility as part of policy development processes.
- To review and develop municipal bylaws considering accessibility needs.
- To increase diverse participation in Village advisory committees and boards.

- To increase the accessibility of the Village website, closed captioning, and online resources.
- To continue to incorporate support for people with disabilities as part of Village-wide emergency preparedness and planning

**ACTIONS TAKEN OR UNDERWAY.**

Introduced accessible Council meeting features (Zoom).

**FOCUS AREA (3): CAPACITY AND COLLABORATION**

The Village must increase its knowledge and develop the skills and standards to identify, remove, and prevent accessibility barriers across programs, services, and projects. The Village also has a role to play in helping support a new standard of accessibility across the broader community.

There are several organizations in our region focused on improving the lives of people living with disabilities. Collaborating with these stakeholders will help the Village to make better-informed decisions that result in positive impacts. These organizations are often a direct and essential support system for people with disabilities and are considered important partners and experts.

The Village also has an important responsibility to lead by example to improve community attitudes related to disability.

The Village has a leadership opportunity to integrate accessibility as part of its core business, and demonstrate high standards of inclusion and communication.

**WHAT WE NEED TO KNOW**

Improved awareness, knowledge, understanding, and new capabilities are required to make positive accessibility impacts. Building corporate capacity is done through education, awareness, hiring, and training and can be supported in the community through stakeholder communications engagement. Working closely with community organizations will help give a voice to individuals and groups who need support.

An Accessibility Working Group utilizing the voice of lived experience needs to be part of accessibility actions in the Village of Midway municipal planning. People with disabilities are experts in their own right. They not only provide expertise in the area of accessibility, but also come with other skills and abilities valuable to the process. We must partner together to truly understand the perspectives, information, and ideas of persons with lived experience.

It is important to foster positive attitudes regarding disabilities. The Village's actions on improving accessibility for the infrastructure, services, programs it controls, and the services it regulates can set an example for the broader community and people's ability to recognize barriers that people with disabilities encounter daily. Removing these barriers can create equality, independence, choice, and control to improve overall quality of life.

## **GOAL**

To lead accessibility change-making within the Village mandate and promote collaborative, positive attitudes in our community.

### **Key Objectives:**

- To offer enhanced training and awareness programs to foster a welcoming corporate environment for people with disabilities.
- To demonstrate inclusivity in Village publications and materials.
- To introduce resources and processes to support and coordinate corporate accessibility efforts, projects, and programs.
- To facilitate regular activities to improve the Village's knowledge and understanding of lived-experience and accessibility challenges across our community.
- To continue to engage with and collaborate with local disability stakeholder groups to gather insights and lived experiences.

### **ACTIONS TAKEN OR UNDERWAY**

- Creation of the Village's Accessibility Working Group to provide input and advice on accessible planning and action.
- Introduction of accessibility statement on all employment postings.
- Offering a long-standing respectful workplace policy and staff training program.
- Accessibility awareness training for senior leaders and key staff members.
- Departmental liaison with community disability and accessibility resources.
- Introduce assessment of accessibility impacts as part of staff reports to Council.

## **IMPLEMENTING THE FRAMEWORK**

Taking action on accessibility will be guided by the commitments in the framework, and supported by good governance, an action plan, resources, and regular reporting on key measures to ensure we are on a trajectory of success. The Village is a dynamic environment, so the program must also respond to changing circumstances and priorities, while making meaningful progress to accessibility. The following outlines how the Village will manage these challenges to purposefully advance the vision of a more inclusive, barrier-free society.

## **ACCESSIBILITY AS A PART OF BROADER INCLUSION EFFORTS**

The Accessibility Framework addresses a single element of community equity and inclusion and is part of an important set of emerging actions and priorities that aim to improve overall social health and well-being across the Village. As planning and programs develop, the Village will continually assess how to best integrate these disparate but related initiatives, to maximize impact and resource efficiency. The Village's work on equity will plan and determine the most appropriate role of an advisory body, made up of persons with lived experience, to help guide the Village and its programs related to issues of accessibility and inclusion.

## **TAKING ACTION**

A series of short-term actions have been identified to commence implementation of the Accessibility Framework and to support the objectives laid out in this document.

Actions will form a part of the Village's overall Accessibility Program. Each year the Village will identify, implement, and integrate accessibility through its annual service planning, capital planning, and project management processes. Implementation of this Framework and reporting on accessibility accomplishments will be included in annual Village reporting cycles.