



NORTH COAST
REGIONAL DISTRICT



**NORTH COAST REGIONAL
DISTRICT ACCESSIBILITY PLAN**

MAY 2024



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Territorial Acknowledgements

The North Coast Regional District (NCRD) acknowledges the traditional territory of the Haida and Tsimshian on which the NCRD is situated.

Message from the Chair, North Coast Regional District

It is my privilege to present the NCRD Accessibility Plan on behalf of the Board of the NCRD.

The Plan is the result of the efforts of the Haida Gwaii Accessibility Committee, NCRD staff, and community members who provided valuable feedback.

The NCRD strives to be an accessible organization where everyone is included. We are committed to identifying and removing barriers that limit full participation by the residents in our communities.

The NCRD Accessibility Plan tackles six priorities, including Employment, Delivery of Service, The Built Environment, Information and Communications, Transportation, and Procurement and will serve as a guide for our organization over the next three years.

The NCRD will continue to work with the Haida Gwaii Accessibility Committee and Prince Rupert & Area Accessibility Committee to ensure that we continue learning so that we can continue responding to the changing needs of our communities.

I look forward to implementing this plan and making our communities more accessible.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Barry Pages".

Chair, North Coast Regional District
Barry Pages



Message from the Chair, Haida Gwaii Accessibility Committee

The best way to make our world more accessible is simply to ask disabled people what they need, and take action. That is the approach guiding our collaboration with NCRD, and we, the members of the Haida Gwaii Accessibility Committee (HGAC), are pleased to present the 2024 NCRD Accessibility Plan.

Early on, we defined accessibility by these principles:

- Freedom, access, and equity: Everyone can participate in everything according to their need.
- Choice and enabling: The ability to choose how to participate.
- Foresight: Including accessibility in the planning stages of projects.
- Compassion and safety: People shouldn't be forced to disclose disabilities.
- Knowledge and acceptance.

Disability is a systemic exclusion of those not considered “normal.” A society-wide response is required. That is why so much of our committee's work involves advocacy and partnership with businesses, organizations, and allies across the region. The need for collective action is only growing.

This plan will inform the development of municipal accessibility plans on Haida Gwaii. It is based on the Haida Gwaii Accessibility Plan – Actions Document, which gathered public input covering six areas of priority: Employment, Delivery of Service, The Built Environment, Information and Communications, Transportation, and Procurement. Input from the committee and the public addresses aspects of several types of disability, including physical and mental disability, invisible and chronic illnesses, and neurodivergence.



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We invite the community to continue to share valuable input so that we can continue to learn and create a more accessible future together.

Chair, Haida Gwaii Accessibility Committee
David Archer



Introduction

The NCRD has a population of 18,181 people living across a land area of 19,775.41 km² as of 2021 in the area surrounding and including the City of Prince Rupert, some islands along the coast, and the islands of Haida Gwaii. The four electoral areas A, C, D, and E include much of the land area but only a small percentage of the area's population (988 in total).

The largest municipality in the NCRD is Prince Rupert with 12,300 residents. The neighbouring municipality of Port Edward has 470 residents. The Village of Daajing Giids (964), the Village of Masset (838), and the Village of Port Clements (340) are all located as pockets inside the boundaries of NCRD Electoral Area D. The remaining population of the NCRD lives within the First Nations reserves in the region. First Nations in the NCRD include Gitga'at First Nation (120), Gitxaala First Nation (300), Lax Kw'alaams Band (630), Metlakatla First Nation (N/A), Old Masset Village Council (545), Skidegate Band Council (700), and the Council of Haida Nation (1,240). The NCRD was formerly known as the Skeena-Queen Charlotte Regional District.

While anyone can have a disability, and a disability can occur at any point in a person's life, disabilities are more common among adults 65 years of age and older. As of 2021, the average age of British Columbia's population was 43.1. Meanwhile, some NCRD communities have an average age that is higher than the provincial average:

- Electoral Area A: 60
- Electoral Area C: N/A
- Electoral Area E: 49.1
- Electoral Area D: 43.6
- City of Prince Rupert: 40.4
- District of Port Edward: 42.8
- Village of Masset: 43.1
- Village of Port Clements: 47.5
- Village of Daajing Giids: 43.9



- Gitga'at First Nation: 36
- Gitxaala First Nation: 38
- Lax Kw'alaams Band: 38.1
- Metlakatla First Nation: N/A
- Old Masset Village Council: 41.9
- Skidegate Band Council: 41.2
- Council of the Haida Nation: 41.5

The remote nature of NCRD communities means that is often more difficult for residents with disabilities to live a barrier-free life, regardless of age.



Policy and Legislation

In 2019, the Provincial Government established the Accessibility Legislation Consultation Advisory Committee. The Committee concluded that British Columbians strongly supported the development of accessibility legislation and that more needed to be done to move towards an environment that was inclusive of all people.

The *Accessible British Columbia Act* came into force September 1, 2022. It applies to prescribed organizations including various public sector, local government and educational organizations as of September 1, 2023, including the NCRD.

The Accessible British Columbia Act mandates that public sector organizations must develop by September 1, 2023:

- An accessibility committee;
- An accessibility plan; and
- A process to receive comments from the public.

In developing and updating its accessibility plan, the NCRD considered the following principles, in consultation with its accessibility committee:

- Inclusion;
- Adaptability;
- Diversity;
- Collaboration;
- Self-determination; and
- Universal design.



Here are definitions from the foundation document of the BC Framework for Accessibility Legislation. These definitions support the rights of people with disabilities, along with the principles set by the province for accessibility:

Inclusion: All British Columbians, including persons with disabilities, should be able to participate fully and equally in their communities.

Adaptability: Accessibility plans should reflect that disability and accessibility are evolving concepts that change as services, technology, and attitudes change.

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 the experiences of individuals. Accessibility plans should acknowledge the principle of intersectionality and the diversity within the disability community.

Collaboration: Promoting accessible communities is a shared responsibility and everyone has a role to play. Accessibility plans should create opportunities for Organizations and communities to work together to promote access and inclusion.

Self-determination: Accessibility plans should seek to empower people with disabilities to make their own choices and pursue the lives they wish to live.

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.



Accessibility Committees

Haida Gwaii Accessibility Committee

The Haida Gwaii Accessibility Committee (HGAC) held its first meeting on September 13, 2023. The Committee consists of Haida Gwaii community representatives as well as representatives from the NCRD, Village of Masset, and the Village of Port Clements. The Village of Daajing Giids was a member up until February 2024.

The HGAC is consisted of the following members:

- David Archer, Committee Chair
- Howard Tsang, Committee Vice Chair (Corporate Officer, NCRD)
- D'Leen Betts
- Ronda Bell
- Leighann Rodger
- Elisa Schatz
- Kirsten Holobuch
- Evelyn Robinson
- Joshua Humphries, Village of Masset
- Marjorie Dobson, Village of Port Clements

Previous member:

- Jasmine Bulbrook, Village of Daajing Giids (until February 2024)

The HGAC has been working towards the development of accessibility plans for each municipality on Haida Gwaii. On April 4, 2024, the HGAC adopted its Haida Gwaii Accessibility Plan – Actions document, which lists accessibility related actions that the HGAC would like to see implemented on Haida Gwaii. The Haida Gwaii Accessibility Plan – Actions document received public input between Friday, January 26, 2024 and Friday,



February 16, 2024 and was further refined by the HGAC at its Wednesday, February 21, 2024 meeting.

The NCRD Accessibility Plan is informed primarily by the Haida Gwaii Accessibility Plan – Actions document.

Prince Rupert & Area Accessibility Committee

The Prince Rupert & Area Accessibility Committee (PRAAC) held its first meeting on Wednesday, May 16, 2023. The Committee includes the City of Prince Rupert, NCRD, Prince Rupert Library, and the District of Port Edward, and has five community members as well as staff representation from the respective organizations who attend.

The PRAAC consisted of the following members:

- Anne Falvo, Prince Rupert Representative
- Ed Landrath, Prince Rupert Representative
- Eleanor Skelton, Prince Rupert Representative
- Grainne Barthe, Prince Rupert Representative
- Val Wiley, Prince Rupert Representative
- Veronika Stewart, Committee Chair
- Howard Tsang, Committee Secretary, NCRD
- Mercedes Taylor, Library Representative, Prince Rupert Library

Previous member:

- Vikki Fraser, Port Edward Representative (until February 2024)
- Sharon Small (until January 2024)

The NCRD is also included in the Prince Rupert & Area Accessibility Committee Plan, which is a separate document.



Related Policy and Planning Work

[NCRD Strategic Plan 2023-2026](#)

The NCRD Strategic Plan sets out five themes to guide the Regional District's use of resources in the current term: housing, board governance, shared services, economy, and North Coast community.

[NCRD Draft Solid Waste Management Plan](#)

In March 2024, the Board of the NCRD approved the Solid Waste Management Plan and is now awaiting approval from the Ministry of Environment. This plan provides a long-term vision of how the NCRD intends to manage its solid waste services. It will guide the solid waste management activities and policy development for the next five to ten years.

[Housing Needs Assessments](#)

In February 2022, the Board of the NCRD received Housing Needs Assessment Reports for Electoral Areas A, C, D, and E as well as a NCRD Housing Needs Summary. The housing needs reports provide valuable housing and demographic information throughout the region and are intended to be used by the NCRD as a planning document to assist the Board in decision-making around housing issues. The reports also contain recommendations for consideration to address identified housing issues throughout the region.



Official Community Plans

The NCRD has three current Official Community Plans:

- Electoral Areas A & C Official Community Plan (2017);
- Rural Graham Island Official Community Plan (2011); and
- Moresby Island Official Community Plan (1995).



Actions and Implementation

Accessibility Plan Actions

Our Action Plan is divided into six priority areas:

1. Employment
2. Delivery of service
3. The built environment
4. Information and communications
5. Transportation
6. Procurement.

These priorities originate from the Accessibility Standards in the *Accessible BC Act*. It was determined that the NCRD would not tackle the priority areas of health and education at this time as those fall outside of the purview of local government. Each barrier has an action, owner, and timeline.



Priority Area - Employment

Barrier	Actions	Owner	Target
<p>Examining potential NCRD employment barriers to those with accessibility needs, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Remote work options;• How jobs are posted;• Consider/accommodate advancement opportunities/training for people with intellectual/learning disabilities;• Work schedules, including breaks;• Fair pay policies; and• Sheltered/supported employment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• NCRD to review related human resources policies and existing practices through an accessibility lens.	Admin	Q4 2024



<p>Examining the accessibility of NCRD facilities through an employment lens:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accessible paths into municipal buildings, including ramps, sidewalks, curb let downs; and• Office layout, bathrooms, work stations, and accessibility aids, such as magnifying screens.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop new NCRD Administration Building using Universal Design standards; and• Review existing facilities to see whether there are accessibility barriers to employment.	Admin	Q1 2025 Q1 2025
<p>Determining accessibility-related barriers to holding municipal office.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• NCRD to learn about accessibility for candidates through Elections BC and advocate for increased accessibility as necessary; and• NCRD to consider accessibility for voters in future elections.	Admin	Q3 2025



Priority Area – Delivery of Service

Barrier	Actions	Owner	Target
<p>Exploring accessibility of NCRD’s waste and recycling programs using Universal Design:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review list of items currently not accepted by the NCRD recycling program; • Review list of items currently not accepted by the Islands Solid Waste Landfill; • Examining community recycling bins, including for cardboard; • Considering community recycling days with a centrally located dumpster; and • Improving communication on recycling and waste. 	<p>Many actions fall under the 2024 NCRD Solid Waste Management Plan, awaiting adoption from the Ministry of Environment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate list of items currently not accepted. • Communicating list of existing transfer stations. • NCRD to contact municipalities about this. • Part of SWMP. 	<p>Admin / Islands Solid Waste / Regional Recycling Depot</p>	<p>After Ministry of Env. decision on the NCRD Solid Waste Management Plan.</p>



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Exploring accessibility of other NCRD services using Universal Design standards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• NCRD to conduct a review of its services.	Admin	Q4 2024
Exploring accessibility of NCRD public events.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• NCRD to conduct a review of its services.	Admin	Q3 2024



Priority Area – The Built Environment

Barrier	Actions	Owner	Target
Exploring accessibility of public bathrooms, including wheelchairs, handrails, and adult changing tables in NCRD communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Developing an online survey to seek community input on public washrooms within Electoral Areas and advocate as required for improved accessibility;• Exploring funding options for accessible public bathrooms; and• If funding is successful, build or upgrade public bathrooms.	Admin	Q3 2024 Q3/Q4 2024 2025
Surveying the accessibility of NCRD facilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review existing NCRD facilities through an accessibility lens, considering ramps when possible; and	Admin	Q1 2025



	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop new NCRD Administration Building using Universal Design standards.		
Consider the lack of sidewalks and street lighting in NCRD Electoral Areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• NCRD to advocate to the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure.	Admin	Q3 2024
Advocating for safe and affordable housing for those with disabilities in NCRD communities including Electoral Areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• NCRD to incorporate advocating for accessible housing into its housing advocacy work.	Admin	Ongoing
Exploring raising funds towards accessibility from short-term rental properties in NCRD communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• NCRD to advocate to the Ministry of Housing.	Admin	Q4 2024
Developing places to rest, including benches along roads and picnic tables (including a longer end for wheelchair accessibility on a concrete slab) in NCRD communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• NCRD to advocate to the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure and BC Parks.	Admin	Q3 2024



Reviewing accessibility relating to waterfront access in NCRD communities including Electoral Areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• NCRD to review accessibility relating to waterfront access and advocate to the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure and BC Parks for improved accessibility.	Admin	Q1 2025
Advocating for accessibility of business buildings in NCRD communities including Electoral Areas and explore funding options to improve business accessibility, including from an employment lens.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review list of businesses in Electoral Areas and inform them about the NCRD Business Façade Improvement Program.	Admin	Q2 2024
Exploring accessibility of Tlell Fire Hall: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Building access;• Downstairs bathroom; and• Access to room upstairs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• While ramps are not workable due to a lack of space, consider other options, including a lift.	Admin	Q2 2025
Exploring accessibility of Tlell Farmers' Market outhouse.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• NCRD to advocate to BC Parks to	Admin	Q2 2024



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	improve outhouse accessibility.		
Exploring accessibility of Tlell Soccer Field access.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support Haida Gwaii Recreation grants application to improve accessibility.	Haida Gwaii Recreation	Q1 2024
Exploring warming spaces during winter months.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Creating, advocating, or partnering with municipalities to create warming spaces during the winter months.	Admin	Q3 2024



Priority Area – Information and Communications

Barrier	Actions	Owner	Target
Considering communication barriers, including people without internet access, and the lack of a newspaper on Haida Gwaii.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Review existing communication policies and practices and ensure future communications are more accessible to everyone on Haida Gwaii.	Admin	Q2 2024
Advocating for a creation of an online space that lists events spaces for rent, including accessible options; and Advocating for a creation of an online calendar that lists community events and recreation opportunities, including accessible options.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">NCRD to advocate to Misty Isles Economic Development Society about creating this service.	Admin	Q3 2024
NCRD to update website to WCAG 2 accessibility standard.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">NCRD to explore website upgrade to WCAG 2 accessibility standard.	Admin	Q1 2025



Exploring streaming NCRD Board meetings online.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• NCRD to consider after new admin building; and• Procuring suitable audio/transcription equipment to ensure best quality.	Admin	Q2 2025
Sharing immediate steps all NCRD organizations can take to improve accessibility.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Creating a short list of 4-5 points drawn from learnings of the HGAC and communicate to NCRD organizations.	Admin	Q2 2024
Working with Accessible Haida Gwaii representatives to highlight other positive accessibility examples.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• NCRD to work with HGAC and Accessible Haida Gwaii to develop content for the NCRD.	Admin	Q2 2024
Highlighting Tow Hill boardwalk and Misty Meadows pathway as good accessible examples.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• NCRD to work with HGAC to develop content for the NCRD's accessibility web page.	Admin	Q2 2024



<p>Educating the public on transportation issues relating to accessibility.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Developing an online survey to seek community input on transportation issues relating to accessibility; and• Communicating NCRD Active Transportation work.	<p>Admin</p>	<p>Q4 2024</p>
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Priority Area - Transportation

Barrier	Actions	Owner	Target
Planning for emergency evacuation, taking into account tsunami's, for people with disabilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consider in future Electoral Area evacuation route mapping project work;• Identifying opportunity to have Tlell Evacuation Route Planning Project team meet with HGAC; and• Identifying emergency and evacuation plans of other governments.	Admin	Ongoing
Exploring accessible transportation options, including for seniors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accessing active transportation funding to further examine feasibility; and• Advocate to the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure and other provincial agencies.	Admin	Q3 2024



Exploring an island wide shuttle that takes people to the airport and tourist attractions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• NCRD to determine feasibility of potential service.	Admin	Q3 2024
Advocating for better accessibility on BC Ferries' routes 10, 11, and 26, including a waiting room, bathroom access, better ramps for people with mobility issues, and elevator access.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• NCRD to advocate to the BC Ferry Authority / BC Ferries; and• BC Ferries delegation at future HGAC meeting.	Admin	Q2 2024
Exploring accessibility of school buses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Advocate to SD50 to improve accessibility of school buses.	Admin	Q3 2024
Assessing municipal trails and sidewalks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reviewing the accessibility of trails in Electoral Areas, including pathways to beaches;• Incorporate accessibility into NCRD active transportation work; and• Collaborate with B.C. Parks.	Admin	Q2 2025



<p>Advocating for creation of a library of accessible items, such as wheelchairs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Advocating to the Vancouver Island Regional Library about including a library of accessibility items; and• Learning from Islands Wellness Society about items that they currently lend out and add as a resource on NCRD web site.	<p>Admin</p>	<p>Q3 2024</p>
<p>Exploring accessible transportation between communities so residents can attend community events.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accessing active transportation funding to further examine feasibility;• Advocate to the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure and other provincial agencies; and• Advocate for reduced fares through private companies/explore subsidies for transportation providers.	<p>Admin</p>	<p>Q3 2024</p>



Priority Area - Procurement

Barrier	Actions	Owner	Target
<p>Exploring accessibility as a mandatory criteria in NCRD purchasing policies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Developing a clear set of accessibility guidelines in purchasing policies;• Seeking the expertise of disabled people and/or accessibility consultant; and• Learning from organizations that have experience with accessibility.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop a staff report to the Board of the NCRD, in consultation with the HGAC and/or the PRAAC.	Admin, Finance	Q2 2025

Next Steps

The NCRD staff will continue to work internally and with the HGAC and PRAAC on actions outlined in the NCRD Accessibility Plan. The NCRD will continue to solicit feedback on the NCRD Accessibility Plan through the established Committees.



Monitoring and Review

The NCRD Accessibility Plan is overseen by the Board of the NCRD and implemented by staff, in consultation with the Haida Gwaii Accessibility Committee.

Reporting

The NCRD Accessibility Plan will be reviewed and updated at least once every three years in accordance with the *Accessible British Columbia Act*.

Feedback Mechanism

The NCRD and HGAC continue to seek public input into the NCRD Accessibility Plan as well as the Haida Gwaii Accessibility Committee – Actions document. Please submit feedback by:

- Email: info@ncrdbc.com; or
- Telephone: 250-624-2002.

For further information, please visit:

<https://www.ncrdbc.com/development/special-projects/hgac>