



**ACCESSIBILITY PLAN  
2025-2028**



## **WELCOME MESSAGE**

In 2022, the Town of Berwick approved its Accessibility Plan, taking a significant step in recognizing the diverse needs of the community. The 2022-2025 Accessibility Plan is a key Town document, and this revision builds upon that work. The plan included in these pages expands on the Town's overall commitment to equity and reflects our broader vision of being a community where everyone feels welcome and included.

The development of this plan has been guided by the principles of the original Accessibility Plan, along with valuable input from the community. Through a community survey, and ongoing conversations, residents have shared their thoughts on existing barriers to accessibility, equity, and inclusion in Berwick. Listening to and responding to this feedback shows that a proactive and responsive approach is needed; one that not only addresses current challenges but also anticipates our future needs as Berwick continues to grow.

This is a living document, meaning it will change as our community does. As we move forward, we recognize that building a truly inclusive town requires ongoing reflection, dialogue, and adaptation. The 2025-2028 Accessibility Plan serves as a framework that will continue to adapt based on community feedback, best practices, and new opportunities for inclusion.

The Town of Berwick is committed to this work and understands that inclusivity and equity are not goals to reach, but actions we must keep taking.

*This plan was created collaboratively by staff and members of the Town of Berwick Accessibility Advisory Committee. Additionally, the feedback of 65 members of the community was invaluable in the creation of this plan. Thank you.*

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# **INTRODUCTION**

The Town of Berwick is committed to creating a welcoming and inclusive community for everyone. This Accessibility Plan outlines the steps we are taking to make sure all people can fully participate in town activities, services, and spaces.

We aim to remove any barriers that might prevent people from enjoying everything our town has to offer. In this plan, you will find information on how we have improved accessibility in Berwick and the actions we will take to continue making progress.

We strive to create an inclusive environment where diversity is embraced, discrimination and hate are actively opposed, and every resident is treated with respect and has access to all opportunities and resources.

We value your feedback and encourage you to share your thoughts and ideas with us as we work together to create a more accessible town.

Thank you for being a part of this important effort!

# DEFINITIONS

- **Accessibility:** Accessibility means ensuring everyone can fully participate in community life by removing barriers, allowing all individuals to engage in activities and access resources without difficulty.
- **Barrier:** A barrier is something that stops or makes it harder for people to do something or go somewhere. It can be a physical object, like a wall, or something like rules, attitudes, situations, or cost that make it difficult for people to access or use something.
- **Built Environment:** The built environment refers to all the man-made spaces and structures around us, like buildings, roads, parks, and bridges. It's everything people design and create to live, work, and move around in.
- **Diversity:** Diversity means having different kinds of people in a group, with differences like race, culture, background, beliefs, and abilities. It's about recognizing and respecting these differences and understanding that they make a community stronger and more vibrant.
- **Equity:** Equity means making sure everyone has what they need to be successful. It's about treating people fairly and giving extra help to those who need it, so that everyone has the same opportunities, regardless of their background or situation.
- **Fiscal Year:** A fiscal year is a 12-month period that businesses or governments use for budgeting, planning, and reporting their financial activities. It doesn't always match the calendar year (January to December) and can start and end at any time. The

Town of Berwick fiscal year is April-March.

- **Inclusion:** Inclusion means making sure everyone feels welcome and involved. It's about including people from all walks of life and treating them fairly, so everyone has the same opportunities to participate and belong.

# **NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS: 2022-2025**

In the first three years of the Accessibility Plan, we have made great progress and met important milestones. From improving accessibility in public spaces to enhancing communication and support for residents, these efforts are making a real difference in our community. We are proud of the work done by the municipality, with the guidance of the Accessibility Advisory Committee, to create a more equitable Town.

## **Built Environment**

- High-visibility and reflective crosswalk markings, and four additional push-powered signal crosswalks have been added since 2022.
- Sidewalk snow removal is done promptly and thoroughly.
- Raised garden beds around Town allow most people to participate.
- Trails are wide and well-groomed.
- An additional connector path has been added, connecting the Harvest Moon trail system to Peter Connell Park/Brown Street.
- Carol’s Place has accessible washrooms that are available in the spring, summer and early fall.
- A new accessible swing has been added to Spicer Park Playground.

## **Communication**

- Council and Committee of the Whole Meetings are now recorded and posted to YouTube the day after meetings take place. The YouTube links to the videos will be accessible on the Town of Berwick website. The Closed caption feature will be added to the recordings.
- Some Town of Berwick staff members have received training for inclusive and plain language.
- The Town of Berwick now uses a mobile app “Voyent Alert” that community members can use to receive updates regarding power outages etc.



- The Town of Berwick now has an active Communications plan reviewed and approved by Council in 2024.

## **Employment**

- Council members have received iPads for reading all council and committee materials, which allow them to control the font size, zoom into images as needed, and has the technology to read or hear text.
- Main office doors and front desk area will be upgraded in 2025 to improve the accessibility of the space for members of the public and possible future employees.
- The Town of Berwick offers virtual interview options for job candidates who cannot attend in person.

## **Goods and Services**

- In addition to “Pay as you Can” introduced in 2021, the Town of Berwick has worked with Schools Plus starting in 2022 to identify families in need of Summer Programming and have offered reduced rates along with finding sponsorships to send more children to camp.
- In addition to the NS Weekly Walks groups already established in Berwick, a Sunday group named “Able Amblers” has been added. This group participates in shorter, slower paced walks than the other walk groups and is accepting of individual limitations.
- The Town of Berwick now has 16 Community Charging Stations for electric vehicles, to help make owning e-vehicles easier for all.
- The Town of Berwick Centennial Solar Garden officially opened in 2023, with the goal of making solar energy accessible for all.
- The Berwick Memory Café, in partnership with the Evangeline Club began in December 2024, serving adults with memory challenges and their families.

## **GOALS FOR 2025-2028**

For the 2025-2028 period, we will continue to build on the guiding principles established in 2022. Goals that were not fully achieved will remain a priority, while also focusing on expanding efforts to further enhance accessibility in Berwick.

### **Built Environment**

- Improve existing infrastructure to improve accessibility.
  - Example: Tennis Court Entrance.
- Include the Accessibility Committee on plans for built environment projects to provide input from an accessibility lens.

### **Communication**

*Ensure municipal programs, services, and communications are accessible and inclusive, meeting the diverse needs of residents.*

- Budget for and provide ASL interpreters at community events that include speeches.
- Inclusive Promotion of events, programs and town updates.

### **Employment**

- Offer diversity and cultural training for all staff so they can provide inclusive services.
- Be accommodating and willing to eliminate barriers for any potential future employees.

### **Goods & Services**

- Partner with community agencies to help develop and run inclusive programming.
- Review the inclusiveness of current town programs and address those barriers.

## **Community Engagement**

- Create accessible and inclusive opportunities for the community to come together in meaningful and constructive ways.

# **ACTION ITEMS (2025-2028)**

The outlined action items are designed to advance the goals of the plan. These steps, broken down on a yearly basis, will drive progress while also guiding ongoing efforts to integrate accessibility and equity in all areas of the municipality.

## **Year 1: Foundation Building (2025-2026)**

- **Policy Development:**

- Considering the revisions made to the Accessibility Plan, create guidelines for when and how the Town should consult the Accessibility Advisory Committee during decision-making processes
- Draft and adopt a plain language communication policy.
- Develop a zero-tolerance policy for hate and discrimination in municipal spaces and events.

- **Staff Training:**

- Provide foundational training on equity, diversity, and inclusion for municipal staff.
- Support local community organizations by sharing training opportunities, and assisting with external grant applications for funding, particularly for equity initiatives.

- **Community Listening:**

- Engage with residents who indicated interest in providing future input through focus groups or interviews by using a form to collect their contact information.
  - Collect feedback from these residents to guide the planning of a mid-year engagement session

## **Year 2: Pilot Programs and Awareness (2026-2027)**

- **Inclusive Promotions:**

- Ensure promotional materials represent the community's diversity.
- Introduce translation options for key documents and online content to serve English as an Additional Language (EAL) speakers.

- **Community Events:**

- Collaborate with local community organizations to support their events and programs that highlight diversity and inclusion
- Expand the annual Christmas events to include educational and celebratory activities that reflect the community's diverse culture

- **Accessibility Enhancements:**

- Engage the Accessibility Advisory Committee to assess physical and digital town assets for accessibility improvements

## **Year 3: Expansion and Implementation (2027-2028)**

- **Policy Updates:**

- Review and refine existing policies based on community feedback and best practices.
- Incorporate equity and anti-racism principles into hiring, procurement, and public service standards by creating guidelines in a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP).

- **Inclusion Audits:**

- Conduct audits of town facilities, programs, and services to identify gaps in equity and inclusion.

- **Youth and School Engagement:**

- Collaborate with Berwick and District School to support at least one workshop or event focused on accessibility and inclusion, gathering feedback from students and staff on how to improve these efforts in the community.
- Create a youth engagement program to involve young adults at the committee level, encouraging their participation in community decision-making and promoting inclusion in municipal projects.

#### **Year 4: Comprehensive Plan Adoption (2028)**

- **Plan Development:**

- Use findings from pilot programs and community engagement to create a comprehensive Equity Plan, with separate Accessibility and Anti-Racism chapters.

- **Sustainability Measures:**

- Establish benchmarks for evaluating progress and sustaining equity efforts beyond 2028.

- **Celebration and Commitment:**

- Host a community event to celebrate milestones and renew the Town's commitment to equity.

## **METRICS FOR SUCCESS**

When measuring goals and outcomes, defined metrics for success will be used, but it is important to recognize that accomplishments may arise in other ways.

- At least one new, or revised, policy and two initiatives implemented annually
- Increased diversity in participation in municipal programs and events
- Increased community satisfaction with inclusivity and accessibility, measured through surveys.
- Staff receive training to apply an equity lens in their work, with improvements seen in how they use inclusive practices in their roles.
- The Accessibility Advisory Committee will develop an annual work plan that outlines goals and expected outcomes
  - At the end of each fiscal year, the Accessibility Advisory Committee will complete a publicly available report card. The report card will have each goal listed and give each grade, with reasoning included.

## **CONCLUSION**

Nearly half of the 65 respondents to the community survey that helped guide this plan have experienced or witnessed discrimination, exclusion, or barriers in our community. The Town of Berwick is committed to listening to, and engaging with, the community to create change. The actions in this plan will help guide the Town in making decisions that reflect and include everyone. By ensuring our policies, practices, and initiatives are welcoming and inclusive, we aim to reduce barriers and build a stronger sense of belonging for all.

Berwick is the 'little town with a lot to offer,' and we will continue to adapt, change, and grow.