

# Measuring Up The North: Terrace Committee

## Summary and Analysis of the Terrace Community Assessment Survey

### Introduction:

The Measuring Up The North: Terrace Committee came together to assess how inclusive and accessible the community of Terrace is for people with disabilities, seniors and families with small children. Using examples from other communities, the Committee developed a survey. The survey asked community members to express their opinions regarding accessibility and inclusivity for persons with disabilities, seniors and families with small children in businesses, public buildings, transportation, and signage. There was a good return of 176 surveys with many comments that offer focus on what needs to be improved in making Terrace more accessible and inclusive. There were opportunities throughout the survey to express opinions on other subjects; the most notable were intersections, walkways, accessible affordable housing, and awareness and acceptance of persons with disabilities.

The following is a summary and analysis of the results of the Terrace Community Assessment Survey, including samples of the opinions offered. A diverse number of people responded to the survey questions giving us a good sample from the community. Most people had some experience as, or knew, a person with a disability, senior or family with small children. Most of the problems in Terrace listed below apply to all three of the categories (people with disabilities, seniors, and families with small children).

1. **Do you have a disability?**  
Yes 37.0%    No 63.0%
  
2. **Please let us know your age category:**  
Under 20      4.1%  
20 - 40      30.2%  
**41 - 64      43.6%**  
65 - 75      10.5%  
76+          11.7%
  
3. **Are you a person who cares for small children (under the age of 10)?**  
Yes 37.1%    No 62.9%
  
4. **Do you know someone with a disability or an older adult (family or friend)?**  
Yes 86.4%    No 13.6%
  
6. **Do you believe Terrace is accessible to people with disabilities?**  
Yes 31.4 %    No 68.6%
  
7. **Do you believe Terrace is accessible to seniors with mobility challenges?**  
Yes 30.8%    No 69.2%
  
8. **Do you believe Terrace is accessible for families with small children?**  
Yes 65.7%    No 34.3%

**Businesses:**

9. How would you rate accessibility to businesses in Terrace (grocery, restaurants, hotels, clothing stores, etc.) for:

	Good	Satisfactory	Poor
Seniors:	22.3%	48.8%	28.9%
People with disabilities:	14.2%	40.1%	45.7%
Families with small children:	25.3%	53.2%	21.4%

Accessibility to businesses is vital for people shopping for the necessities of life (e.g., food and clothing). Having businesses in our community accessible allows the freedom of choice to acquire these necessities for all people. Access includes accessible parking, entrances, washrooms and helpful staff.

*Concerns Raised:*

- Larger businesses are mostly accessible (e.g., Walmart, Save On Foods, Safeway and banks).
- Back door entrances have allowed some businesses to be accessible, but it is viewed as not being respectful to persons with disabilities.
- Many small businesses are not accessible at all. Entrances have stairs, the lip is too high to enter in a wheelchair, doors are too heavy, doorways too narrow, counters for service are not low enough, or the washrooms are not accessible to wheelchairs.
- Seating for seniors and/or disabled customers would help.
- Most of the hotels are not accessible to people who use wheelchairs.
- There are very few accessible parking spots and the ones that are available are either poorly marked or not respected by other motorists.
- Narrow aisles and high shelves are common in stores causing certain areas of stores to be inaccessible.
- More ramps, door delays, or automatic doors are needed.

*Comments from Surveys:*

- "If buildings are designed to be utilized by people in wheelchairs with limited strength and only with the use of one arm, most issues of concern would be addressed."
- "Depends a lot on staff: some are great and show respect and patience, others are unwelcoming or impatient. This attitude happens towards anyone who is experiencing difficulty."
- "There doesn't seem to be a lot of information out there for people who don't work in the field. Businesses don't appreciate the potential revenue source if they only made their businesses more accessible and user-friendly."
- "Some businesses are not disabled and mobility friendly. We have problems getting in with strollers."
- "If businesses wanted my money and many others' money (patronage) they should make their location accessible and attractive to all concerned."

Public Buildings:

10. How would you rate physical accessibility to public buildings in Terrace (health/medical, City buildings (including the library), schools (including the College) for:

	Good	Satisfactory	Poor
Seniors:	23.6%	45.9%	30.6%
People with disabilities:	17.3%	38.5%	44.2%
Families with small children:	30.1%	53.4%	16.4%

Many services that improve quality of living are provided in these buildings. There is only partial accessibility in many of the public buildings and that poses limitations for some members of the community.

*Concerns Raised:*

- The stairs at City Hall make it inaccessible to those who have difficulty with stairs.
- The Aquatic Center is in need of a different type of lift that is movable that would allow people who use wheel chairs to access the hot tub, shallow pool and deep pool.
- The Library's ramp is difficult to locate and some people did not know it existed.
- The access to the Art Gallery needs to be improved.
- Many doors at schools and public buildings are not automated and are heavy.
- Many of the public buildings need to improve upon their accessible washrooms.

*Comments from Surveys:*

- *"City Hall has extremely poor physical accessibility for seniors and people with disabilities. It's impossible for anyone using a walker or wheelchair to approach the main desk. It doesn't represent all the residents within the City."*
- *"We need ramps to get into more public buildings."*
- *"I find a lot of good things in this category."*

### Existing Signage:

11. How would you rate existing signs for accessibility (multiple formats (e.g., large print, Braille, sign language, technology), universal signage and way-finding), etc.:

Good 14.8% Satisfactory 38.1% Poor 47.1%

Finding our way can be made simpler by having a universal system of signage that is uniform, offers varying sensing formats and large print. Terrace offers some different formats of signage but to an inconsistent degree.

### *Concerns Raised:*

- Street signs would be more helpful if in larger print, at a higher height from the ground, and in a more central location.
- Accessible parking signs are not kept in good condition, or are covered by snow and/or gravel in the wintertime.
- More crosswalk signs are needed.
- Not all crosswalks have audible crossing signals or crossing lights.
- Braille is used in some public buildings, but its use is sparse and could be improved upon.
- Universal signage for washrooms is required.

### *Comments from Surveys:*

- "We have Braille signs in Terrace?"
- "All need improvement to improve quality of life in Terrace."
- "Print is often too small for visually impaired."
- "College and schools should have signs in Braille and large print. Library needs more Braille and large print books."
- "More sign language is needed."
- "Not enough consideration for blind people."

Public Transportation:

12. How would you rate accessibility to public transportation for:

	Good	Satisfactory	Poor
Seniors:	20.1%	32.6%	47.2%
People with disabilities:	17.0%	29.8%	53.2%
Families with small children:	22.9%	41.2%	35.9%

Public transportation was the part of the Community Assessment Survey where the most opinions were expressed and much agreement on the concerns - most are happy to have a transit system although they feel it needs improvement.

*Concerns Raised:*

- There need to be more handyDART busses, with more flexible timing, longer hours and availability on weekends and holidays. Some described how motorized wheel chairs cannot access the handyDART system.
- The transit is in need of new routes throughout Terrace, Thornhill and an extension to include the Airport, Lakelse Lake and Braun's Island.
- There needs to be bus service available on Sundays and holidays and the hours need to be extended. Many felt the bus schedule did not coincide with schooling and general programs very well.
- The busses that lack wheelchair access are limiting to many people.
- More of the bus stops need shelters and seats for riders to wait out of the weather.
- Awareness of seating etiquette was mentioned and allowing seniors and those with mobility issues to have a seat is not always respected by riders.

*Comments from Surveys:*

- "handyDART is fine for regular business hours, but what if you want to go out in the evenings? The wheelchair accessible taxi is only available at the convenience of the owner/operator - people with mobility challenges are confined to their homes after business hours unless they have access to a vehicle that can get them around. Can the City not look at ways to improve and build on the public transit service, including the Taxi Saver program?"
- "All Transit busses should be low rider, no stairs, so wheelchairs, walkers and baby strollers have room to fit properly. We should not have to ask for the ramp to fold down either; this is a big problem."
- "Not all busses are accessible and not all bus stops are accessible. Streets, sidewalks and bus stops aren't kept clear of snow and ice in the winter."
- "handyDART works if it is available when needed. Often it is already booked. Bus service is fantastic but would like to see services on Sundays and holidays."
- "Improving but a long way to go. The new service to Kitselas, Kitsumkalum and Kitimat was a major step. Congratulations! Now we need busses to run more often to enable access."

### *Intersections, Sidewalks and Traffic:*

It appears that community members would appreciate any improvements made to the sidewalks, crosswalks and intersections.

#### *Concerns Raised:*

- There are many areas of Terrace where there are no sidewalks and if there were it would improve the safety of pedestrians.
- Some sidewalks are in need of maintenance and improved curb cutting for approaches to crosswalks and intersections.
- The timing of crosswalk lights needs to be lengthened as many pedestrians with mobility challenges are finding there's not enough time to cross.
- Not all major intersections downtown have crosswalk lights.
- More audible crossings needed.
- Improved snow removal required, especially on sidewalks.
- There need to be more street lights in the high traffic areas.
- The use of painted lines to warn of a change in grading (e.g., curb cuts or elevation changes) would be useful for persons with disabilities.
- There's a need for more benches in the downtown area for people to rest on.

#### *Comments from Surveys:*

- "The Overpass is dangerous for wheelchairs, and for slow walkers - REALLY dangerous! Ice and snow on sidewalks make winter walking treacherous - impassable for wheelchairs and for those with mobility challenges."
- "A lot of seniors, people with disabilities and small children need to do a lot of walking around town. This can be difficult and dangerous because we only have one Overpass, we don't have a lot of crosswalks marked and a lot of Terrace motorists drive unsafely. Many don't yield to pedestrians!"
- "The sidewalks on some streets are non-existent and others are badly heaved and pitted. Street lighting is also poor. It seems that some progress is being made and this Committee is shedding more light on the problems so hopefully it will improve quickly."
- "More walking paths would be great. One suggestion I would like to make is to extend Lakelse Avenue on past Twin River Estates to the old bridge. There is a lot of foot traffic daily, and it is not a safe place to walk, as the vehicle traffic is quite heavy and fast. A black top walkway like the new one from Kalum Street up to the skate park would be well used I'm sure."
- "There should be sidewalk access between the two bridges on the east end of the City. It is impossible to walk safely between the bridges ... gravel sidewalk on the west side of the old bridge is subject to washing out in heavy rains and over winter."

### *Awareness and Acceptance:*

Other issues raised included the need for more awareness and acceptance of persons with disabilities.

#### *Concerns Raised:*

- Attitudes towards people with disabilities (especially invisible disabilities) are often very negative and make some people feel unwelcome in public places.
- Business employees are at times not tolerant of customers with disabilities - awareness training may help.

#### *Comments from Surveys:*

- "I am a young adult and have been seeking summer employment. I have been unable to find a job, despite an excellent resume, willingness to work and persistence. I feel many people/businesses are small-minded and are not hiring people with disabilities even someone with something as small as a hearing loss ... Employers need to be educated, as they will find that statistically, disabled people will do a better job and have less absence than able people."
- "It is demeaning to have to ask for help ..."
- "Increase mandate to look at attitudinal, financial, employment, communicational and environmental barriers."

### *Other Issues Raised:*

#### *Concerns Raised:*

- Lack of accessible trails and playgrounds.
- Park toilets need to be more accessible.
- There was a need expressed for accessible (and affordable) housing.

#### *Comments from Surveys:*

- "We need more low cost (accessible) housing for people with disabilities and seniors."
- "People with disabilities should have more help in the community."

and finally:

- "We love Terrace; we lived here 20 years ago and there have been a lot of wonderful changes. Thanks for doing a great job."

### Conclusion and Recommendations:

The results of the Community Assessment Survey are critical to providing direction to the Measuring Up the North - Terrace Committee and the City of Terrace. Based on the input received from the community, the Committee has updated its future objectives and action plan. During the coming months, the Committee will:

- Continue to raise awareness regarding Measuring Up the North - Terrace to improve accessibility and inclusion in the community;
- Work with the City of Terrace to improve accessibility to City facilities and infrastructure (including playgrounds, trails, sidewalks and crosswalks);
- Work with other levels of government (School District, Northern Health Authority, Province and Federal, etc.) to improve accessibility to public facilities in Terrace;
- Work with businesses to promote the benefits of improved accessibility and service to customers with disabilities;
- Continue working with the City to review policies and bylaws dealing with accessibility, and encourage bylaw enforcement;
- Review public transportation and improve availability and accessibility;
- Work with employers to increase awareness and opportunities for employment of persons with disabilities and seniors;
- Research grant funding opportunities for builders and businesses to help increase accessibility and inclusion in Terrace, and secure funding for the ongoing operation of the Measuring Up the North - Terrace Committee.

A number of projects have been identified as a result of the input received from the community, to help address accessibility to City buildings. Longer term issues, such as access to the second floor of City Hall, improvements to sidewalks, playgrounds and trails, etc., will be dependant on the City's capital budget funding in future years. In the short term, funding from 2010 LegaciesNow will be utilized in *City buildings* to improve public accessibility:

- Replace door knobs with door levers and install door closers (delays);
- Install disabled grab bars in public washrooms;
- Improve signage for disabled parking, washrooms and ramp access;
- Install Zoom text software at the Library for public computer access;
- Design City's new website to include features to improve accessibility.

While the Committee recognizes that these projects do not address all of the accessibility concerns in City facilities, it is a good start and additional upgrades will be pursued as funding and City budgets permit. The Committee will continue looking at ways to address other issues in the community over the coming months.

The Measuring Up Terrace Committee would like to thank the community and participants in the Assessment Survey; your input has been invaluable in the efforts to make Terrace more accessible and inclusive for all.