



WHAT WE HEARD ABOUT ACCESSIBILITY

*Community and Protective Services
August 22 – September 30, 2022*



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We humbly acknowledge that the land on which we live, learn, work and play is Treaty 8 Territory, the traditional and ancestral lands of the Cree, Dene, and unceded territory of the Métis.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

The Government of Canada introduced Bill C-81, also known as the Accessible Canada Act, in June 2018, to ensure a barrier-free Canada. The creation of this Act included extensive consultation and key areas to address accessibility were identified including the built environment. The purpose of the Accessible Canada Act is to make Canada barrier-free by January 1, 2040. Other provinces have passed provincial accessibility legislation.

The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo's (RMWB) Diversity and Inclusion Community Plan (2017-2022) has six community priorities including the reduction of barriers to resources and services. This priority includes physical accessible infrastructure and inclusive spaces and services.

The Advisory Committee on Aging has included in the Age-friendly Work Plan (2021-2024) a strategy to support the implementation of barrier-free building design by completing a comprehensive accessibility audit.

The scope of the Accessibility Audit is to complete the assessment of some facilities and will identify the necessary retrofitting in those buildings.

Currently, designers and builders must comply with the requirements of the Alberta Building Code to allow for proper and safe access and use of buildings. However, the Building Code requirements are only a minimum standard.

There are other standards used to evaluate buildings and sites such as the Principles of Universal Design and Barrier-free Design Guidelines. Several Municipalities had developed a list of criteria to measure the accessibility in existing buildings and sites as well as for the construction of new facilities.



STAKEHOLDER LIST

- Wood Buffalo Residents
- RMWB Internal Stakeholders
- Canadian Mental Health Association – Wood Buffalo (CMHA)
- Neurodiversity YMM
- Salvation Army – START program
- St. Aidan’s Society
- Golden Years Society
- Special Olympics Wood Buffalo
- Autism Society of the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo
- McMan Family Supports for Children with Disabilities
- Blue Heron Support Services Association
- Boys and Girls Club of Fort McMurray
- Variety Alberta
- Fort McMurray Minor Hockey Association (Wood Buffalo Royals)
- Alzheimer Society Fort McMurray
- The Royal Canadian Legion Branch 165
- Multicultural Association of Wood Buffalo
- RMWB Accessibility Working Group
(includes members of: Regional Advisory Committee on Inclusion, Diversity and Equality, Regional Inclusion Committee, St. Aidan’s Society, Voices of Albertans with Disabilities, Advisory Committee on Aging, Representative of Municipal Departments, and community members at large)

COMMUNICATION CHANNELS



Participate Wood Buffalo Project Page



Social Media



Rural Newsletter



Email

ENGAGEMENT TACTICS



In-person Public Engagement Session



Virtual Public Engagement Session

ENGAGEMENTS

242

Online Visits to Participate Wood Buffalo

90

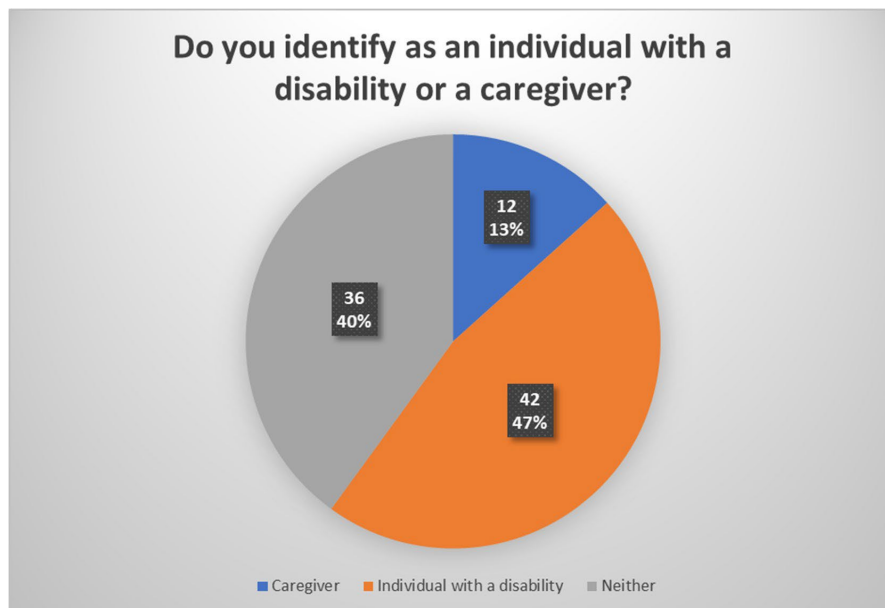
Online Survey Respondents

~200

In-person and Virtual Participants

ONLINE SURVEY RESULTS

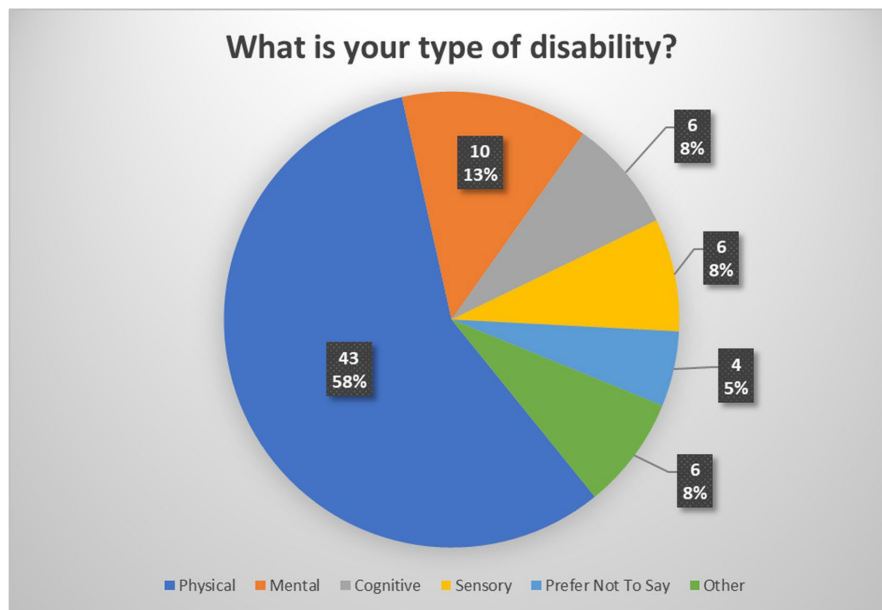
Accessibility is different for everyone. It was important to recognize the insights of caregivers with the important role they play in assisting others, including the 13 percent of those who chose to complete this survey.



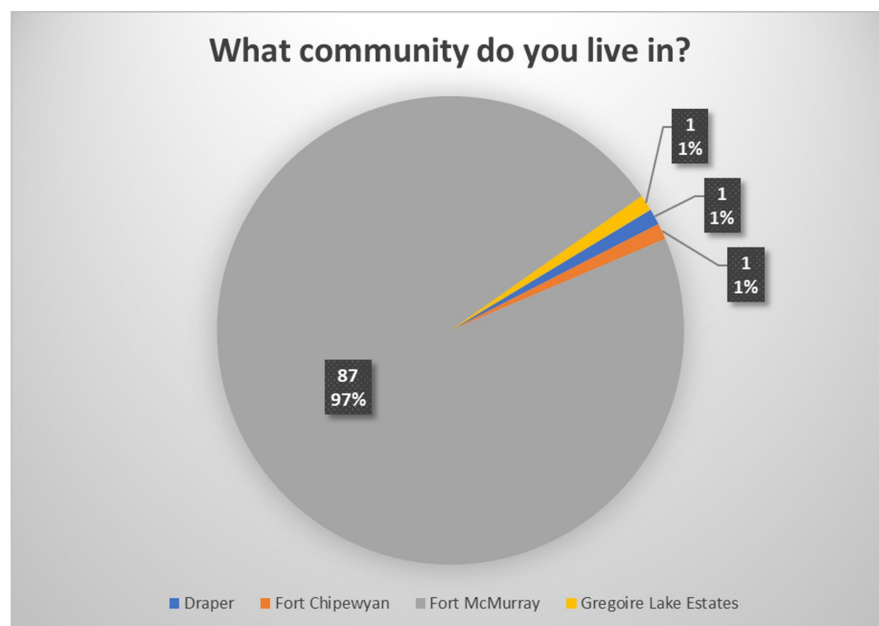
Not all disabilities look the same. That's why it was important to understand how obstacle(s) affects residents, directly from those facing accessibility challenges.

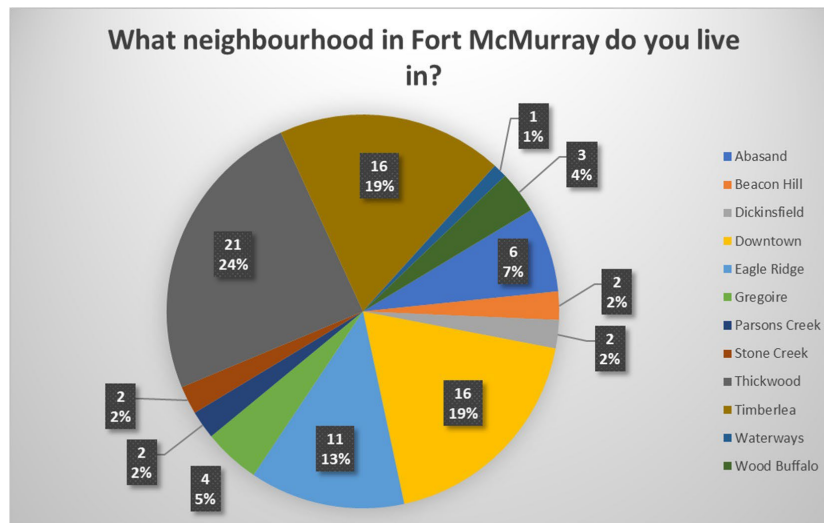
Over half of those that participated in the survey identified having a physical disability. However, it is important to recognize that residents also indicate facing mental, cognitive and sensory disabilities, showing the opportunity facilities have to improve their structures.



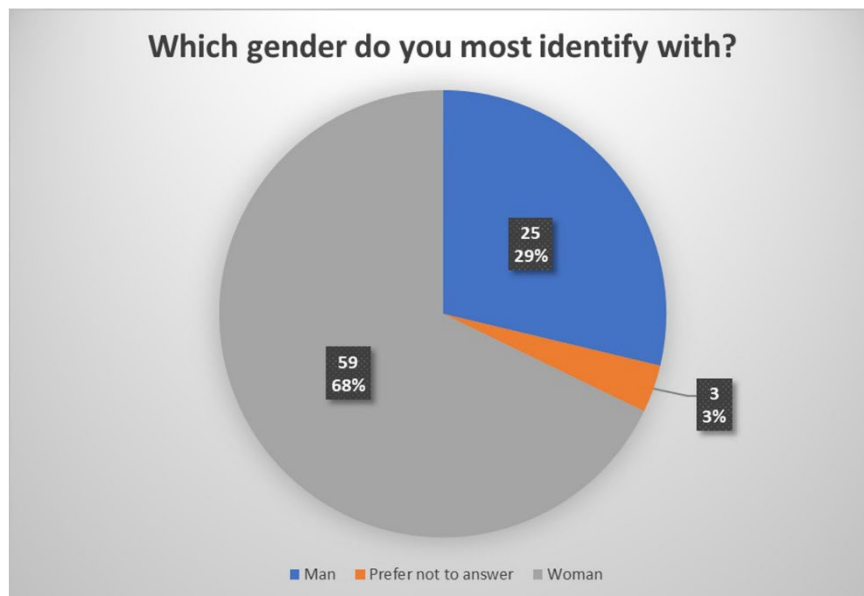


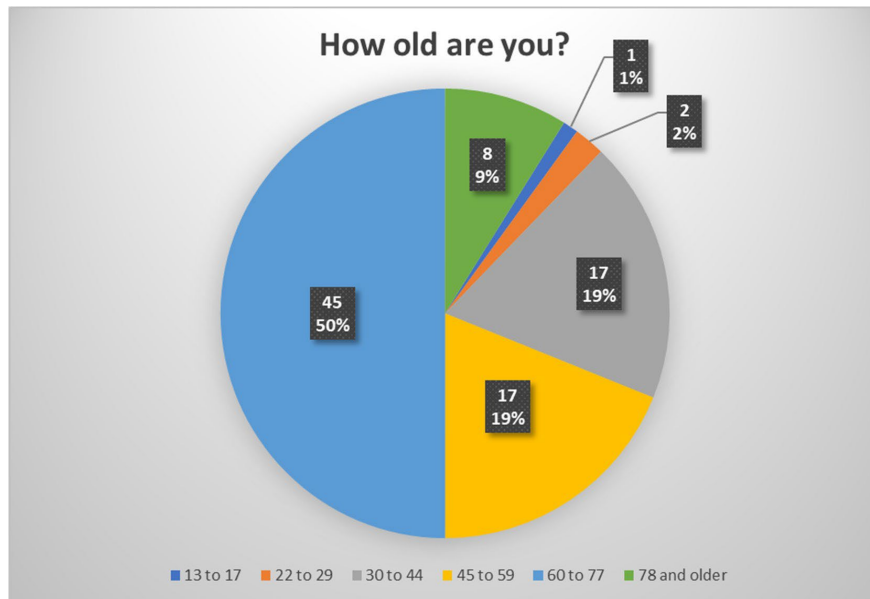
We also asked residents to share where in the region they reside. While 97 percent of respondents identified Fort McMurray as their place of residence, the remainder of the responses were received from rural community members.





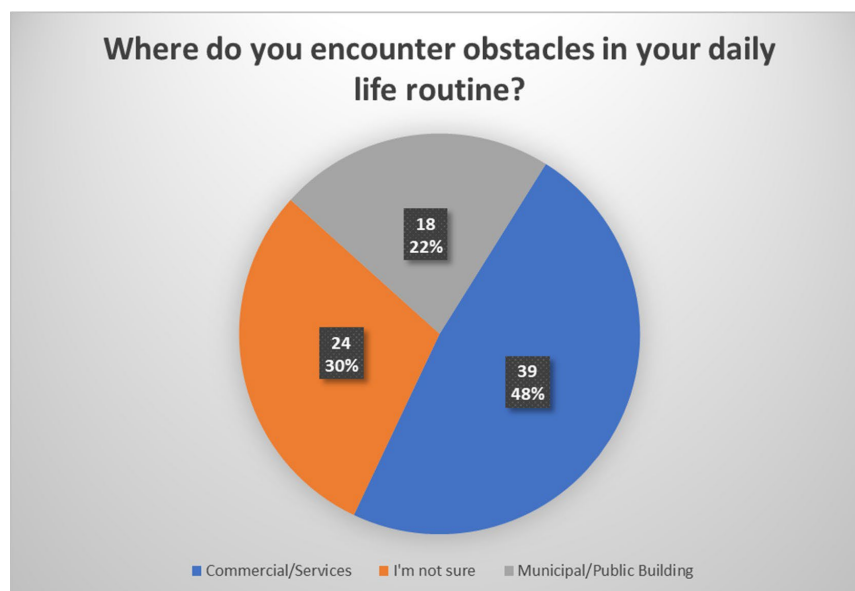
Demographics were further established by asking which gender participants identified with most, as well as confirming age. While youth (13 – 29 years old) only accounted for three percent of total survey respondents, adults (30 – 59 years old) made up 38 percent, and older/senior adults (60+) made over half of the participants of this survey.



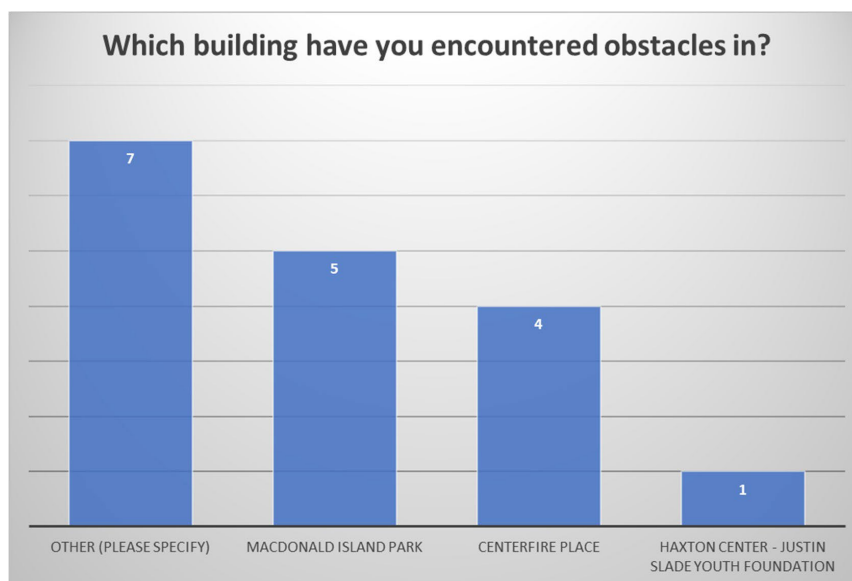


An important part of the accessibility audit is to better understand where residents are encountering obstacles, whether that is Municipal/Public buildings such as Jubilee Centre or commercial and retail facilities.

Nearly half of respondents identified obstacles in commercial/retail facilities while others felt Municipal and or public buildings created accessibility obstacles. Interestingly, 30 percent of respondents indicated they weren't sure in which facilities they faced difficulties. Additional comments from participants below show detailed information about the structures where they identify existing obstacles.



A brief list of Municipal and public building examples was provided before participants were encouraged to share their own experiences. Timberlea Landing Office, a Municipal space, was also mentioned as a commercial space where limitations are faced.



Seven respondents chose the “Other” option identifying the following buildings:

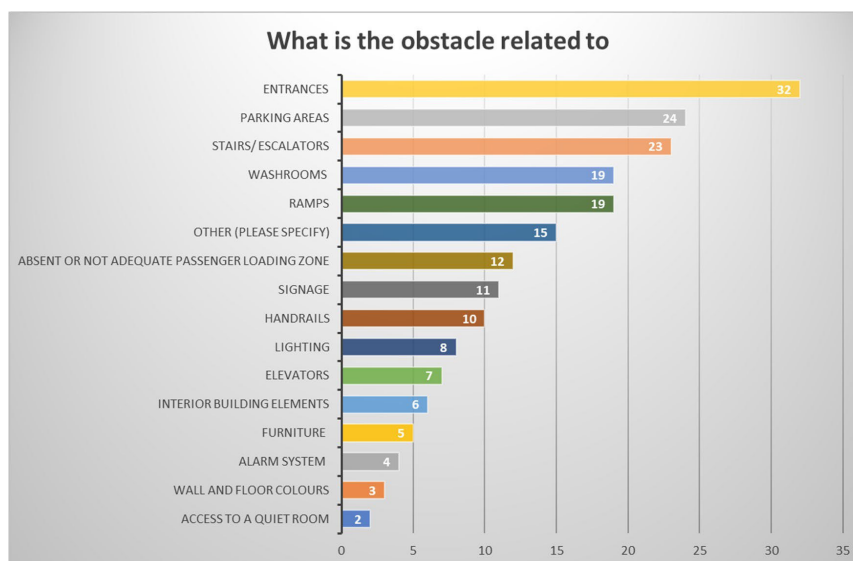
- Jubilee Plaza
- Wood Buffalo Regional Library
- Wood Buffalo Housing – Siltstone Place
- Wood Buffalo Housing – 103 Powder Drive
- Pedestrian Walkways
- Shell Place
- Redpoll Centre

The following commercial/retail places mentioned were:

- Most shops in Tamarack Village
- Woodland Park Apartments
- River City Centre
- Peter Pond Mall
- Registry Office Downtown
- Dynalife
- Cooper and Company Law Firm
- River Park Glen
- Accel Physical Therapy
- Vista Ridge



To better understand how these locations can be inaccessible for different disabilities, the survey explored various building areas.



Additional obstacle categories indicated and detailed by survey respondents include:

Seating:

- Lack of designated seating for events in addition to wheelchair spaces
- When being seated, chairs slip on the floor
- In locations with long distances between amenities, there is a lack of seating

Communication:

- No communication access for deaf or hard of hearing residents
- No audible crosswalks
- No audible bus announcements
- Lack of closed captioning and sign language interpretation at municipal events
- Lack of braille throughout the region
- Signage is not clearly visible
- Difficulty when floor and stairs are the same color



Mobility:

- Ability to move on/off sidewalk
- Curb cutouts do not always lead to a pedestrian crosswalk
- Transportation for wheelchair/disabled people is limited
- Accessibility ramps become slippery during the winter and are not cleaned properly
- Lack of proper winter clearing in parking lots
- Ramps are too narrow for electric wheelchairs to maneuver
- There is a need for more handicap parking stalls
- Improved SMART bus schedule and access
- Lack of sidewalks in the downtown area

Access:

- Automatic door buttons on first floors of buildings but no other floor
- Push buttons for doors do not work in some places
- Main entryways that have any raised lip makes it difficult for wheelchair access
- Public bathrooms are not accessible
- Lack of ramps in/out of businesses
- Handicap parking is too far from entryways
- Lack of automatic doors

Other:

- There is a lack of adult change tables
- Obtaining parking permits
- Lack of programs for newcomers
- There is a lack of lighting in parking lots



IN-PERSON AND VIRTUAL SESSIONS

In addition to the online survey, in-person and virtual information sessions were offered for residents. The following feedback reinforces and expands on the themes explored from the survey responses.

Twenty-one attendees joined an informal engagement session or online virtual workshops to discuss accessibility and share the obstacles faced in the community. During this time, individuals discussed day-to-day struggles such as uncleared pathways and parking lots during the winter months at businesses and other organizations. Some discussion also led to the need for more inclusive experiences for seniors and those with sensory issues (lowered lighting, quieter music).

Another important topic of conversation included wheelchair accessibility in restaurants, shops, organizations, workplaces, and other service providers. A need for direct access into swimming pools for those in wheelchairs was also shared during these sessions. In other instances, accessing washrooms is impossible as it is located on the second floor of a stair-only building. Finally, having more seating available at the Jubilee building's lobby would be helpful, especially on Council nights.

Additional obstacles were shared during this time, and although they do not pertain to this project specifically, they have been recorded and shared with the appropriate groups. These obstacles include equity in the workplace, SMART bus extended hours and service areas, training staff to assist wheelchair users, and housing for adults over 55.

NEXT STEPS

We thank you for your input and ideas throughout the engagement process of this project. The Community and Protective Services department will thoroughly review all the information and feedback provided. Once they have gathered all the information necessary, the facilities to be assessed from the perspective of accessibility will be defined based on this feedback.

To stay informed about the project, or to receive project updates visit participate.rmwb.ca/accessibility-audit.

We encourage you to continue using your voice to make our region even better by learning about all current projects. Visit participate.rmwb.ca to stay connected!





WHAT WE HEARD ABOUT FACILITY ACCESSIBILITY

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