

FOUNDING EDITION • JULY 2026

Accessible Horizons Community

Executive Vision Book

A rural living, learning, employment, and community campus
in Colorado's San Luis Valley



Conceptual visualization. Final siting, architecture, infrastructure, and landscape design require site-specific professional review.

Accessibility should never be an accommodation added afterward. It should be the foundation upon which communities are built.

Purpose of This Volume

This Executive Vision Book defines the mission, identity, development logic, and non-negotiable principles of Accessible Horizons Community. It is the governing narrative for the master plan that follows. Later volumes will translate this vision into site planning, architecture, landscape, programs, operations, finance, fundraising, governance, and implementation.

PROJECT PROMISE

A place where disabled people can participate without first negotiating the environment.

Working status

Accessible Horizons Community is a working title and a predevelopment concept. No parcel, zoning entitlement, water right, building program, tax-exempt status, public funding, or operating license is represented as secured unless documented in a later project record.

Professional reliance

This volume is a strategic and conceptual planning document. It is not legal advice, an engineering certification, an architectural instrument of service, a land-use determination, a clinical program, or a construction estimate. Licensed Colorado professionals and relevant authorities must validate all site-specific, regulatory, financial, clinical, and technical decisions.

Language and participation

The project will respect individual preferences for person-first or identity-first disability language. Disabled people will participate as paid advisors, board members, residents, employees, program designers, and evaluators—not only as recipients or testimonials.

Executive Summary

Accessible Horizons Community is envisioned as an accessibility-first rural neighborhood and learning campus in Colorado's San Luis Valley. Its first public program will offer scholarship-supported, multi-day educational stays for small groups of young people with disabilities. Participants will engage in adaptive gardening, greenhouse production, food preparation, animal care, outdoor recreation, independent-living practice, mental wellness, employment exploration, and self-advocacy.

The long-range vision adds paid employment and independent homes for adults with disabilities. Residents would hold leases or other legally appropriate housing rights, choose their services and daily routines, earn competitive wages in real jobs, and remain connected to the broader San Luis Valley. Housing, employment, education, and support services will be designed as related opportunities—not conditions imposed on one another.

A courtyard-style founding compound will serve as headquarters, caretaker residence, administrative base, hospitality center, and a demonstration of beautiful accessible living. The broader campus may include a learning center, greenhouses, gardens, orchard, food forest, small livestock areas, workshop and barn, outdoor classrooms, recreation areas, renewable-energy systems, water and wastewater infrastructure, scholarship lodging, and future accessible homes.

CRITICAL DISTINCTION

The goal is not to create a self-contained world. The goal is to create a fully accessible home base with deliberate pathways into the wider community.

The opportunity

The United States had 44.7 million people with disabilities in the civilian noninstitutionalized population in 2023, representing 13.6 percent of that population. The Census Bureau also reported 10.2 million employed adults ages 18–64 with disabilities. These figures describe a large and diverse population; they do not imply a single program model. They do underscore the importance of housing, work, recreation, and education systems that support choice across disability types and life stages.

The Vision

A person arriving at Accessible Horizons should not encounter a sequence of exceptions. The route from parking or drop-off to a bedroom, greenhouse, garden bed, chicken coop, classroom, dining table, trail overlook, workplace, and neighbor's front door should be continuous, intuitive, dignified, and attractive.

The lived experience

- Arrival feels like entering a Colorado neighborhood, not checking into a facility.
- Accessible routes are the primary routes used by everyone.
- Support is available without dominating the visual or social environment.
- Participants choose activities, take reasonable risks, and contribute in ways that matter.
- Homes provide privacy, control, and the ordinary rhythms of adult life.
- Employment produces transferable skills, competitive wages, and connection to community.
- Nature is encountered directly through adapted tools, surfaces, seating, mobility equipment, and thoughtful staffing.

What success looks like

Success is not measured by how many people are placed on the property. It is measured by whether people gain meaningful choices, skills, earnings, relationships, confidence, mobility, and access to the broader community. Built features matter because they make those outcomes possible.

Mission, Vision, and Values

Mission

To create an accessibility-first rural community in Colorado’s San Luis Valley where people with disabilities can learn practical skills, experience nature, pursue meaningful work, and—when they choose—build independent adult lives in homes of their own.

Vision

A future in which disabled people do not have to overcome avoidable barriers before they can participate in housing, work, education, agriculture, recreation, and community life.

Founding values

VALUE	COMMITMENT
Dignity	Design and service begin with respect, privacy, adulthood, and control.
Choice	Participation, residence, employment, supports, schedules, and relationships are not bundled or coerced.
Belonging	People are neighbors, colleagues, learners, teachers, hosts, and leaders.
Access by design	Accessibility is integrated into beauty, circulation, operations, communications, and technology.
Meaningful work	Jobs are real, paid competitively, supported appropriately, and connected to transferable skills.
Community integration	The campus is a base for participation in the San Luis Valley, not a substitute for it.
Stewardship	Land, water, energy, animals, funds, and trust are managed responsibly.
Accountability	Outcomes, incidents, finances, feedback, and limitations are reported honestly.

The People the Community Will Serve

Accessible Horizons is disability-inclusive, not diagnosis-defined. Programs may serve people with physical, sensory, intellectual, developmental, cognitive, communication, or multiple disabilities when the program can safely and appropriately meet their access and support needs.

Initial participants

The initial scholarship program will focus on small cohorts of transition-age youth and young adults. Eligibility, age ranges, staffing ratios, medical exclusions, behavioral supports, and caregiver participation will be defined only after program design, insurance review, clinical consultation, and a realistic assessment of staff competencies.

Future residents and employees

Future housing and employment opportunities may serve adults who desire rural living and whose goals align with available housing, transportation, employment, and supports. Admission to housing will not require employment by the organization, and employment will not require residence on campus.

Families and support networks

Parents, caregivers, personal assistants, chosen family, and service coordinators may participate when invited or authorized by the individual. The adult participant's voice, privacy, legal rights, and supported decision-making arrangements remain central.

PARTICIPATION STANDARD

Nothing about us without us becomes an operating rule: disabled people hold decision-making power throughout planning, governance, hiring, and evaluation.

The First Public Program

The launch program will provide scholarship-supported educational stays of several days for small groups. Lodging, meals, instruction, adaptive equipment, and scheduled activities will be covered for scholarship recipients. An approved parent, caregiver, or personal assistant may accompany a participant when appropriate.

A sample learning arc

1. Arrive: complete an access-centered orientation, establish personal goals, and learn the campus independently.
2. Explore: rotate through gardening, greenhouse, animal-care, cooking, and outdoor-learning experiences.
3. Contribute: complete authentic team tasks with visible results rather than simulated busywork.
4. Practice: build routines related to self-advocacy, meal planning, transportation, scheduling, workplace communication, and wellness.
5. Reflect: identify strengths, preferred supports, interests, and next steps.
6. Reconnect: receive follow-up resources and pathways into return programs, local services, training, or employment exploration.

Program design principles

- Participation is voluntary and choice-rich.
- Activities offer multiple meaningful roles and levels of physical demand.
- Learning goals are individualized without infantilizing adult participants.
- Caregiver presence supports access without displacing participant agency.
- Health and safety planning is individualized, proportionate, and respectful.
- Scholarships address the full cost of participation, including disability-related access costs.
- Evaluation measures experience and outcomes without turning participants into fundraising objects.

A Neighborhood, Not an Institution

The long-term residential concept carries the project’s greatest promise and its greatest ethical risk. A disability-specific rural campus can become isolating if housing, employment, transportation, services, social life, and authority are controlled by one organization. Accessible Horizons must design against that outcome from the beginning.

Structural safeguards

SAFEGUARD	DESIGN COMMITMENT
Housing independence	Residents hold ordinary rights and are not required to work, study, worship, receive services, or socialize through the organization.
Service choice	Residents may select qualified outside providers and personal assistants where legally and operationally feasible.
Employment separation	Jobs use standard hiring, supervision, pay, advancement, and grievance processes. Housing cannot be threatened by employment status.
Community mobility	Transportation connects residents to employment, healthcare, shopping, recreation, civic life, and relationships beyond campus.
Visitor and privacy rights	Homes have privacy, lockable doors, visitor choice, communication access, and control over daily schedules, consistent with law and individual plans.
Resident power	Residents participate in governance through a resident council, board representation, accessible complaint channels, and independent advocacy.

Policy alignment

The U.S. Supreme Court’s Olmstead decision and federal home- and community-based services policy emphasize community integration, autonomy, dignity, choice, and access to ordinary community life. CMS guidance specifically notes that rural geography does not remove the obligation to provide people receiving Medicaid-funded HCBS the same opportunity for community integration available to people without disabilities in that rural community.

The Place

The San Luis Valley offers a powerful landscape and a credible setting for agriculture, solar energy, outdoor learning, and a strong sense of place. It also presents hard constraints: high elevation, cold nights, wind, intense sun, limited water, long travel distances, rural healthcare access, transportation gaps, and highly site-specific land and water rights.

Site-selection tests

- Legally sufficient and dependable water supply for domestic, program, agricultural, livestock, and fire-protection needs.
- Documented zoning and subdivision pathway for the intended mix of nonprofit, residential, educational, agricultural, hospitality, and employment uses.
- Year-round emergency access and response times compatible with the population served.
- Feasible wastewater, power, broadband, heating, fire suppression, and backup systems.
- Terrain that supports accessible grades and snow management without excessive earthwork.
- Reasonable connection to a town, healthcare, schools, workforce, suppliers, cultural institutions, and public life.
- Soils, drainage, wind, wildfire exposure, radon, flood risk, and environmental conditions suitable for development.
- A development envelope large enough for phased growth without requiring the organization to overbuild early.

PREDEVELOPMENT RULE

No land should be purchased solely because it is inexpensive. Water, access, entitlement, infrastructure, and community connection determine whether a parcel is truly affordable.

Campus Framework

The physical plan will organize buildings into small, legible clusters connected by a continuous accessible public realm. The campus should read as a sequence of courtyards, front doors, gardens, working landscapes, and gathering places—not as a collection of program buildings around parking.

DISTRICT	ROLE
Civic heart	Learning center, shared dining and teaching kitchen, program administration, gathering space, and a primary courtyard.
Founding compound	Headquarters, caretaker residence, emergency coordination, hospitality, and demonstration accessible home.
Working landscape	Greenhouses, adaptive gardens, orchard, food forest, animal areas, barn, workshop, wash/pack, and equipment storage.
Scholarship lodging	Small-scale rooms or cottages with caregiver options, shared social space, and direct access to learning areas.
Residential neighborhoods	Future independent homes in small clusters with real front doors, privacy, shared greens, and multiple routes to campus and town.
Outdoor network	Accessible trails, overlooks, recreation, demonstration gardens, quiet spaces, shade, weather refuge, and adaptive mobility staging.
Infrastructure spine	Water, wastewater, power, solar, storage, waste handling, communications, maintenance access, and resilient backup systems.

The accessible public realm

The pathway network is the organizing architecture of the campus. Routes will be smooth, firm, stable, slip-resistant, well-drained, illuminated, and protected from avoidable conflicts with vehicles, livestock, snow storage, hoses, thresholds, and service operations. Rest points, weather refuge, wayfinding, tactile and visual cues, charging, and emergency communication will be integrated as a coherent system.

Architecture of Dignity

Code compliance is the floor. The design standard is effortless participation. Buildings will use familiar residential and agricultural forms, warm materials, daylight, acoustic control, clear sightlines, and durable details. Accessibility will be expressed through proportion, space, hardware, technology, and choice—not institutional finishes.

Universal design commitments

- Step-free primary entrances and no-threshold transitions.
- Generous circulation and turning space sized for real mobility devices, including outdoor all-terrain chairs.
- Reach-range diversity, adjustable work surfaces, knee clearance, and seated and standing options.
- Roll-in bathing, transfer choices, caregiver clearance where needed, and dignified emergency access.
- Visual, audible, tactile, and plain-language communication.
- Low-force doors and hardware, protected automatic operators, and reliable power backup.
- Glare control, high-contrast cues, acoustic zoning, quiet rooms, and sensory choices.
- Fixtures and controls that remain usable with limited reach, grip, dexterity, vision, hearing, or processing speed.
- Furniture plans that preserve circulation after occupancy.
- Maintenance standards that keep access features functional through snow, mud, wind, wear, and program operations.

Demonstration without spectacle

The headquarters demonstration home will make good design visible to families, builders, funders, and public officials, but it will remain a real home. Tours, photography, and donor access must respect residential privacy and never turn the occupants' daily life into an exhibit.

Meaningful Employment

Employment will be built around competitive integrated employment: people with disabilities work part- or full-time, including self-employment, for competitive compensation in integrated settings. Customized employment may be used to match individual strengths and employer needs, but it is a route to real employment—not a substitute for wages, standards, advancement, or choice.

Potential employment pathways

- Greenhouse production, propagation, harvesting, wash/pack, and sales.
- Hospitality, reservations, guest services, housekeeping, culinary production, and events.
- Animal care, feed preparation, recordkeeping, egg handling, and educational demonstrations.
- Grounds, irrigation monitoring, composting, tool management, snow operations, and facilities support.
- Retail, e-commerce, inventory, fulfillment, customer service, and product development.
- Education, peer mentoring, accessibility demonstrations, recreation support, and community outreach.
- Administration, bookkeeping, communications, scheduling, data, fundraising support, and board service.
- Adaptive-equipment inspection, cleaning, staging, rental support, and user orientation where appropriately trained.

Employment guardrails

Every job requires a written role, lawful hiring process, competitive wage, reasonable accommodation process, training, supervision, performance standards, advancement pathway, and grievance procedure. Program participation is not unpaid labor. Volunteer roles remain genuinely voluntary and do not displace paid work.

Development Roadmap

Accessible Horizons will grow only as governance, demand, staffing, infrastructure, operating revenue, and community relationships become ready. Phase boundaries are decision gates, not promises tied to arbitrary dates.

PHASE	DECISION GATE AND SCOPE
0 — Validate	Establish nonprofit and disability-led governance; conduct listening sessions; test demand; define program and risk boundaries; complete parcel criteria, feasibility, and fundraising case.
1 — Establish	Secure a feasible property; build essential infrastructure and the founding compound; create a small adaptive garden/greenhouse demonstration; operate administrative and pilot day programs.
2 — Welcome	Add accessible learning space and modest scholarship lodging; launch multi-day cohorts at intentionally small scale; validate staffing, safety, transportation, and outcomes.
3 — Work	Expand year-round agricultural and hospitality enterprises; build competitive integrated employment partnerships; add workshop, barn, wash/pack, retail, and equipment functions as demand supports them.
4 — Live	Develop the first independent-home cluster only after housing rights, service choice, transportation, community integration, operating reserves, and resident governance are proven.
5 — Replicate	Improve the model, publish standards, train partners, and consider additional neighborhoods or sites without weakening the original community.

The anti-overbuilding rule

No major facility should be built because it looks persuasive in a rendering. Each phase must have a defined user, operating model, staffing plan, maintenance plan, capital source, cash reserve, and evidence that smaller or shared alternatives are insufficient.

Governance and Ethical Commitments

The organization's authority over land, housing, employment, programs, and fundraising creates an obligation to distribute power deliberately. Governance must include people whose lives are affected by the decisions, along with the professional expertise needed to operate safely and sustainably.

Founding board composition

- A meaningful proportion of voting directors who are disabled, with representation across lived experiences.
- Independent expertise in nonprofit governance, finance, rural development, law, disability rights, healthcare access, education, agriculture, housing, and construction.
- San Luis Valley residents and partners with local knowledge and accountability.
- Clear conflict-of-interest rules concerning founder housing, compensation, contracts, related parties, property, and donor restrictions.
- Term limits, board evaluation, committee charters, succession planning, and protected whistleblower channels.

Founder residence safeguard

Because the headquarters includes a caretaker residence, the organization must document the operational necessity, fair-value treatment, private-benefit controls, occupancy agreement, succession and vacancy terms, utilities and maintenance allocation, and board approval through independent review. The residence serves the mission; the mission does not serve the residence.

GOVERNANCE PRINCIPLE

The strongest version of this project will invite scrutiny early—especially where mission, property, employment, housing, and founder interests intersect.

Impact Framework

Accessible Horizons will publish a focused impact dashboard that combines participant-defined outcomes with operational and community measures. Counts alone—beds filled, programs delivered, eggs collected, or visitors hosted—do not establish meaningful impact.

DOMAIN	ILLUSTRATIVE MEASURES
Access	Percent of planned activities independently reachable and usable; accommodation response times; unresolved access barriers.
Choice and agency	Participant-reported control over schedules, activities, supports, privacy, and goals.
Learning	Skills attempted, demonstrated, retained, and transferred after participation.
Employment	Competitive placements, wages, hours, retention, advancement, benefits access, and employee satisfaction.
Housing	Resident choice, stability, privacy, rights, service-provider choice, and connection beyond campus.
Belonging	Reciprocal relationships, community participation, leadership roles, and resident-defined social connection.
Safety	Incidents, near misses, safeguarding concerns, emergency performance, corrective actions, and psychological safety.
Stewardship	Water and energy use, land health, animal welfare, waste, maintenance backlog, and infrastructure reliability.
Equity	Who applies, attends, receives scholarships, is hired, leads, and experiences barriers—reviewed across disability and other identities.
Financial resilience	Revenue concentration, operating margin, reserves, deferred maintenance, scholarship coverage, and enterprise performance.

Evaluation ethics

Data collection will be accessible, proportionate, consent-based, privacy-protective, and useful to participants. Public storytelling requires informed permission and a credible ability to decline without affecting services, housing, employment, or scholarships.

The Case for Partnership

Accessible Horizons is not a project one organization can responsibly build alone. Its feasibility depends on local government, disability organizations, independent-living centers, schools, workforce agencies, healthcare providers, colleges, architects, engineers, agricultural experts, employers, transportation partners, families, advocates, philanthropy, and—most importantly—disabled people with varied experiences.

Near-term partnership agenda

- Establish a paid disability advisory council before committing to a site or final program model.
- Convene San Luis Valley listening sessions with residents, public agencies, Indigenous and Hispano community voices, disability organizations, and potential neighbors.
- Build relationships with independent-living, vocational rehabilitation, Medicaid, education, workforce, housing, transit, healthcare, and emergency-response systems.
- Recruit professional partners for land-use, water, civil, geotechnical, environmental, architecture, landscape, accessibility, energy, fire, insurance, and legal feasibility.
- Identify employers and enterprise partners that extend opportunity beyond campus.
- Develop a shared research and evaluation agenda with safeguards against extractive storytelling or data collection.

What partners are being invited to build

Not a retreat that ends when the visit ends. Not a housing development without work and community. Not a training program without real places to use the skills. Partners are being invited to help create a durable pathway: encounter possibility, practice capability, pursue opportunity, and—when desired—live with genuine independence.

Non-Negotiables

7. Disabled people share governing power.
8. Accessibility is planned, funded, constructed, maintained, and audited from the beginning.
9. Housing, employment, services, and program participation are not coercively bundled.
10. Employment is competitive, integrated, and paid; training is not disguised labor.
11. The campus remains connected to the wider San Luis Valley.
12. Growth follows demonstrated need and operating readiness.
13. Water and infrastructure feasibility precede property enthusiasm.
14. The headquarters residence is governed transparently as a mission-supporting asset.
15. Safety systems protect people without stripping ordinary adult choice and dignity.
16. The organization reports limitations, failures, incidents, and outcomes honestly.
17. No photograph, story, or donor experience takes priority over a participant's privacy.
18. The community must feel like a neighborhood.

CANON RULE

If a future decision conflicts with these commitments, the decision changes—not the commitments.

From Vision to Master Plan

This volume is the narrative anchor for the 25-volume Accessible Horizons master plan. The next documents will convert the vision into spatial, operational, financial, organizational, and public-facing systems.

VOLUME	FOCUS	PURPOSE
Volume 2	Master Site Plan	Translate districts, circulation, infrastructure, phasing, and site-selection criteria into a testable spatial framework.
Volume 3	Architectural Design Guide	Define building types, accessibility requirements, materials, systems, details, and performance standards.
Volume 4	Landscape Architecture Plan	Create the accessible public realm, climate strategy, planting, recreation, wayfinding, and maintenance framework.
Volumes 5–7	Agriculture and Programs	Design productive operations, education, scholarship access, staffing, safety, and evaluation.
Volumes 8–12	Enterprise and Strategy	Establish business, nonprofit, grant, five-year, and twenty-year plans.
Volumes 13–16	People and Support	Build capital campaign, donor, board, and volunteer systems.
Volumes 17–22	Delivery and Standards	Define operations, construction, cost, risk, partnerships, and accessibility controls.
Volumes 23–25	Public Identity	Create brand, website, and public-relations systems consistent with the project's ethics.

Reference Framework

These sources establish the high-level public-policy framework used in this volume. Later technical volumes will add current Colorado statutes, regulations, adopted codes, local land-use documents, standards, peer-reviewed research, and site-specific professional findings.

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