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Huron County Accessibility Advisory Committee's 2023 ACCESSIBILITY PLAN UPDATES

The Huron County Accessibility Advisory Committee has worked diligently to achieve the goals defined within the approved plan. Recognized achievements include:

Accessibility Plans:

The County of Huron has created an “Annual Multi-Year Accessibility Plan” and a “2023 Accessibility Update” under the Ontarians with Disabilities Act 2001 and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act 2005, with annual updates on successes. The County of Huron has completed both requirements with the documents approved by Huron County Council at the December 2023 County Council meeting.

Site Plan Reviews:

The Huron County Accessibility Advisory Committee has been actively engaged with Municipal and County staff and organizations in conducting Site Plan Reviews in a timely fashion. The Committee believes public awareness will continue to stimulate community participation and the subcommittee's time and commitment. The Committee reaches out to each local municipality to review municipal facilities and projects. Recommendations were made for each review. The Reviews have been taking place virtually via ZOOM, in person meetings with participation of the Public Works Officers and by site visits. Examples of completed and/or current site plan reviews in process for 2023:

- Blyth Intersection reconstruction
- Main Street and Sanders Street Intersection, Exeter
- Gibbons Street Assisted Living facility construction
- Sanders Street apartment construction
- North Huron Council Chamber
- Huron County OPP Station in Clinton

- Huron County Economic Development / Planning Department located at 57 Napier Street Goderich 2 new accessible parking spaces.
- Electric Vehicle Charging Stations in County of Huron
- Seaforth Post Office Ramp
- Wingham Patrol Yard new build-preliminary review of parking spaces
- Review of Accessibility Lift in a municipal facility

Government Directives and Regulations:

The Accessibility Advisory Committee provided updates and advice about new government directives and regulations to the County Council and the Municipal Working Group. The Working Group is made up of one volunteer/staff member from each partner municipality. Each member of the group reports back to and shares newly developed resources and material approved by the County Council to their Mayor/Councilors.

2023 Accessibility Awards of Merit for Barrier-Free Design

This Award promotes public awareness of the importance of barrier-free design and programming recognizes excellence in accessibility efforts. Awards are presented to the owner of a building or facility that has been designed or renovated with special regard to accessibility for persons with a disability. There are 2 award categories – Business and Public Sector.

The following is a listing of the 2023 Award Recipients:

Business Category Award

The Riverview Local Eatery

Public Sector Category Award

Central Huron Municipality

The Township of Ashfield-Colbourne-Wawanosh

Sandra Thompson Memorial Accessibility Champion Award

The Accessibility Champion Award was established in 2022 to honor the memory of Sandra Thompson and to celebrate the International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

Sandra Thompson was dedicated to promoting accessibility in Huron County, was a leader in inspiring others to improve accessibility in our community and worked as the Accessibility Coordinator for the County of Huron until 2016. She was from the Bluevale area.

The International Day of Persons with Disabilities falls on December 3 each year. This day is endorsed by the United Nations and is important because we need to realize just how many people there really are who are impacted by disability.... World-wide there are currently one billion people! That's essentially saying that one in every seven people in the world are facing challenges and barriers due to some specific type of disability. In Ontario, the data tells us that 24.1% of the population (age 15 and older) identify as having a disability.

The Accessibility Champion Award recognizes and honours an individual in Huron County who:

- has shown dedication and commitment to promoting accessibility in our community
- has demonstrated exemplary commitment & leadership towards advancing accessibility
- is working to build a more inclusive community
- is making a difference in the lives of people living with a disability

Nominations included: a detailed description of the nominee's work and initiatives; A signed testimonial(s) that speak to the contributions and impact of the individual to accessibility in the County of Huron. The 2023 Award winner is Carol Leeming.

Continued use of Resources:

- Continued connectivity with County Council, Partnering Municipalities, and Businesses.
- The Municipal Accessibility Working Group continues to meet via ZOOM two times per year. Topics related to accessibility were discussed including municipal accessibility projects, the rigor of the Ministry Accessibility Audits, review of Accessibility Plans for the 2023, and ideas for providing training on accessibility to their new Councils. Additionally, the Group was encouraged to consider hosting events during National AccessAbility Week from May 25 to 1 June 2024.

- An Accessibility Tour of Clinton was held to show and discuss various accessibility features of recreational facilities, parking, sidewalks, playgrounds, entrances, and businesses. The HCAAC will continue to participate in such tours to ensure that partnering municipalities become well versed with the National Accessibility standards and how to translate the AODA and the ODA into reality.
- The HCAAC has begun working on a project to create short videos about how spaces may be made accessible in a how-to context. Funding has been applied for by the PASS (Public Accessibility Standards Simplified).
- The Committee continues to encourage local businesses to get involved in creating barrier free communities.
- The HCAAC continued in 2023 to participate in the Back Alley Artist Extravaganza. Our 4'x4' art board was created to promote the HCAAC, accessibility and that 'everyone is welcome' in Huron County. The art board has now found a home in the Huron County Museum.



Photograph shows a row of paintings the nearest painting has multi-coloured sun rays with accessibility logo and Huron County printed in the middle.

- A Portable Accessible Washroom has been a focus of discussion for HCAAC. This continues to be an initiative that will be pursued in 2024.
- County staff and IT Department: Website accessibility is an important focus. Accessibility training is required by all County employees.

- o Background: New public websites and significantly refreshed websites were required to be compliant with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines WCAG 2.0 Level A by January 1, 2014. Furthermore, by January 1, 2021, all public websites and web content posted after January 1, 2012, must meet WCAG 2.0 Level AA.
- o WCAG 2.0 is an internationally accepted standard for web accessibility developed by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C). Following the WCAG 2.0 guidelines makes content accessible to people with a wide range of disabilities, including:
 - Blindness and low vision
 - Deafness and hearing loss
 - Learning disabilities
 - Cognitive impairments
 - Mobility impairments
 - Speech impairments
- The HCAAC continues to promote the development of accessibility training to employees/staff through continuous learnings on training requirements defined in the Integrated Accessibility Regulation. These learning opportunities are customized into six modules:
 1. Customer Service
 2. General Requirements
 3. Human Rights
 4. Employment
 5. Information & Communication
 6. Design of Public Spaces
- All new County staff received required training within an appropriate time frame. All staff are required to receive training on accessibility standards for customer service and use of assistive devices.

- Upon request, provide information in accessible formats and with communication supports at the same cost charged to others. Publicized the availability of accessible formats and communication supports on website and documents.
- Continue to work with IT and Human Resources departments to train staff on Accessibility Standards.
- The “Huron County Universal Design and Accessibility Guidelines” is being reviewed and updated with the assistance of the Planning and Development Department. This review started in 2022 and will be completed in 2024. An updated version will be provided to local Municipalities once it is completed. This document assists in their review of site plans under section 41, Site Plan Control Area, of the Planning Act.
- The HCAAC was approached by Welland and Oxford County AACs to assist in strengthening their abilities to review site plans. The HCAAC will continue to develop presentations designed to help fellow AACs and our partner municipalities in this regard.