



Accessibility

Multi-Year Accessibility Plan: 2023-2027 Inclusive Programs, Services and Spaces for All

Adopted by the Municipality of Grey Highlands Council on XXXXXX

This plan was created by Municipality of Grey Highlands staff in consultation with the Grey County Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee. The Plan is available in alternate formats upon request such as print, electronic, plain text and verbal. Other formats may be considered on a case-by-case basis. Additionally, communication support is also available upon request.

This multi-year plan is available online at www.greighighlands.ca

For more information about Grey Highlands' Accessibility initiatives, please contact Debbie Yip, Human Resources Manager at 519-986-2811, hr@greighighlands.ca or in person at:

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Municipality of Grey Highlands' Commitment to Accessibility

The Municipality of Grey Highlands (Grey Highlands) is committed to providing programming and services that consider the diverse needs and abilities of the people we serve. This Multi-Year Accessibility Plan will guide Grey Highlands as we strive to provide services that go beyond compliance and improve the experiences of the public, staff and anyone who interacts with Grey Highlands.

A Background on Accessibility at Grey Highlands

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)

The AODA sets a roadmap for an accessible Ontario by 2025. This is to be achieved through mandatory standards that public, private and not-for-profit organizations need to meet. Grey Highlands needs to meet the deadlines and requirements of the large public sector organization description under the act.

AODA Standards include:

- Customer Service
- Information and Communication
- Employment
- Transportation
- Design of Public Spaces

In addition to the requirements under the Design of Public Spaces Standard, Grey Highlands must follow the Ontario Building Code (OBC). The OBC was recently updated to improve barrier-free design and to ensure indoor spaces of buildings are accessible.

Consultation and Grey County Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee

Under the AODA, Grey Highlands is required to consult with individuals, persons with disabilities and the municipal Grey County Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee (GCJAAC). Grey Highlands is committed to working with these persons and its GCJAAC to ensure legislation is met. The committee meets approximately four times per year, plus additional meetings and consultation as required.

Implementation

Accessibility is an important element of providing excellence in government service and aligns with Grey Highlands Strategic Plan. Providing accessible and inclusive programs and services is part of Grey Highlands' culture for customer service. Grey Highlands supports the Province's goals of making Ontario accessible by 2025 and will work within its means to meet all requirements of accessibility legislation and to eliminate barriers in our services and workplaces. These include barriers that are: physical, attitudinal, systemic, communication, and technological.

Structure

The Accessibility Coordinator refers to Grey Highlands' staff for accessibility. This position oversees compliance reporting as well as participates on the GCJAAC; however, all staff and departments have a role to play in the implementation of this plan and in ensuring the programs, services and materials Grey Highlands offers meet accessibility legislation.

The GCJAAC reports to Grey County's Committee of the Whole. The GCJAAC provides an advisory role and final decisions are the responsibility of Grey Highlands Council.

What is a disability?

Under the AODA, a "disability" is defined as:

- any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation, or disfigurement.
- a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability.
- a learning disability or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language.
- a mental disorder.
- or an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the *Workplace Safety & Insurance Act, 1997*.

This broad definition includes disabilities of different sensitivity, visible as well as non-visible disabilities, and disabilities which may be temporary or have effects that come and go over time.

Barriers

This multi-year plan will help Grey Highlands strategize ways to identify, address and prevent barriers that limit persons with a disability from fully participating in our programs and services.

Barriers are obstacles that prevent someone with a disability from doing a day-to-day activity that many people take for granted. The traditional definition of a barrier has been expanded beyond physical obstructions. There are several other categories of barriers to consider. These include:

Physical Barrier: Buildings, public spaces or features that restrict or impede physical access. Example: a doorway that is too narrow to accommodate a person in a motorized scooter.

Communication Barrier: An obstacle that prevents the transfer, processing or interpreting of information. Example: a print brochure with text too small to read, or a document written in a way that is too complicated to understand.

Attitudinal Barrier: Prejudgments and assumptions that directly or indirectly discriminate against persons with disabilities. Example: assuming all visually impaired persons can read Braille or treating a support person as if they are your client.

Technological Barrier: When technology cannot or is not modified to support various assistive devices and/or software. Example: a website that doesn't provide for increased text sizes.

Systemic Barrier: Policies, practices and procedures that do not consider accessibility. Example: requiring a valid driver's license for a position prevents a person with visual impairment from applying for the job.

Our Progress on the AODA Regulations

The following pages outline our accomplishments and our commitments over the next five years in meeting the accessibility standards in five key areas: **Customer Service, Information and Communication, Employment, Transportation and Design of Public Spaces.**

There are also general requirements that apply across all the accessibility standards.

General Requirements

Procurement: Persons with disabilities will be treated equitably with respect to the procurement, use and benefit of municipal services, programs, goods, and facilities in a manner that respects their dignity, independence, and integration. This commitment extends to residents, employees, visitors and other stakeholders with visible and non-visible disabilities. Furthermore, the Municipality will ensure that accessibility is integrated into all municipal initiatives, business practices, boards, committees, and departments. Where it is not practicable to incorporate accessibility criteria and features

into the procurement of goods, services or facilities, an explanation will be provided, upon request.

Reporting: Reports will be shared with Grey Highlands' Council on the progress and implementation of this multi-year accessibility plan and this information will be posted on www.greighighlands.ca and will be available in alternate formats upon request. The multi-year accessibility plan will continue to be updated once every five years with other updates made throughout the term as required. Reports will be filed bi-annually with the Accessibility Directorate.

Minutes of the Grey County Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee will be provided to Council.

Training: All Grey Highlands' employees and volunteers receive mandatory accessibility training during orientation. Everyone will receive general training on accessibility which will include legislation and the requirements of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation, Human Rights Code and Customer Service. Staff will also receive the necessary job-specific training to ensure their day-to-day work is accessible. Staff and department heads will have the responsibility of staying up to date with changes within their designated fields (example: a web designer taking WCAG training). The Accessibility Coordinator is available to provide additional support as needed.

2023-2027 Goals:

1. Improvements can be made to better identify which staff receive job-specific training and to identify more opportunities for staff development.
2. Consider implementing lunch and learn style refresher training for staff.
3. Continue to assign AODA Refresher sessions on a bi-annual basis.

Feedback: Grey Highlands is always open to suggestions about ways to improve the accessibility of our programs and services. The public is encouraged to share their comments by contacting us in person at the address below, by calling 519-986-2811, emailing info@greighighlands.ca or by mail to:

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Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR)

Accessible Customer Service Standard

Our Commitment: Continue to provide staff with the training they need to provide high-quality accessible service to people of all abilities who access Grey Highlands' programs and services. To design and provide programs and services that consider accessibility and respect the dignity and independence of the people we serve.

Progress: Grey Highlands trains all new employees in accessibility and the Accessible Customer Service Standard as part of mandatory orientation. Public facilities are designed with accessibility in mind and major updates to the facilities have improved. Grey Highlands continues to listen to feedback to find ways to improve the accessibility of our programs and services.

2023-2027 Goals

1. Provide refresher training to staff about accessible customer service.
2. Continue to remove barriers by adding accessible features to facilities where the public accesses services.
3. Include subsidies for business owners to purchase portable accessibility ramps through the Community Improvement Plan.

Information and Communications Standard

Our Commitment: Grey Highlands is committed to providing information and communications about our programs and services in an accessible manner to people of all abilities.

Our Progress: Grey Highlands follows accessible document design principles and ensures procured design services are accessible. All public documents are made electronically accessible to the best of our ability. Where necessary, documents can be made available upon request at no expense to the requestor. Grey Highlands' website is designed to the WCAG 2.0. Grey Highlands is also committed to producing information in plain language and has provided opportunities for staff to improve their writing skills.

2023-2027 Goals

1. Arrange opportunities for plain language training for staff on an annual basis.
2. Staff continue to stay informed of WCAG regulations and attend training opportunities.
3. Ensure all digital media, such as videos or podcasts, produced by Grey Highlands are fully accessible.
4. Update Grey Highlands' corporate style guide for accessible documents.

Employment Standard

Our Commitment: Grey Highlands is an equal opportunity employer providing inclusive and accessible recruitment and employment practices.

Progress: Grey Highlands continues to meet the requirements of the Employment Standard. Accommodation is available at all points in the recruitment process at the request of the applicant. Grey Highlands works with staff with disabilities to develop accommodation plans.

2023-2027 Goals

1. Update job descriptions to include accessibility requirements specific to each role.
2. Continue to prioritize accessible recruitment and employment practices.
3. Human Resources staff will continue to remain informed of any updates to the Employment Standard and policies are kept up to date.

Transportation Standard

Our Commitment: If Grey Highlands begins providing public transportation services, the municipality will be committed to providing accessible services that meet all provincial legislation.

Progress: Grey Highlands does not currently provide a public transportation program, nor does it license taxicabs as regulated under the Transportation Standard.

Design of Public Spaces

Our Commitment: Grey Highlands will ensure that public properties and facilities meet the requirements of the Design of Public Spaces standard as well as the Ontario Building Code.

Maintenance of Public Spaces: Grey Highlands will reasonably maintain public spaces and accessible elements of all accessible trails, playgrounds, paths of travel and outdoor eating areas. See *Appendix A*.

Our Progress: Grey Highlands continues to design public spaces with accessibility in mind and refers designs and drawings to the Grey County Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee for input and advice.

2023-2027

1. Improve documentation and continually update maintenance procedures for Grey Highlands' facilities in respect to the Design of Public Spaces Standard.
2. Ensure new structures are built with accessibility in mind and continue consulting with the GCJAAC about new builds.
3. Consider implementing other accessibility improvements as recommended by the GCJAAC or the public.
4. Build a fully accessible Burnside Parkette in the downtown center of Markdale.
5. Install an accessible water fountain and bicycle repair/parking lot at Kimberley Hall.
6. Continue maintenance and replacement of existing sidewalks to meet accessibility requirements.
7. Develop an accessible master trail plan.
8. Ensure that the Road Safety Community Partnership Committee is trained in accessibility requirements so that recommendations coming forward have considered accessibility.
9. Ensure any renovations identified in the Building Condition Assessment report are completed with accessibility standards.
10. Install an accessible playground in Maxwell Park.

Other Accessibility Legislation

Ontario Municipal Elections

Municipal Elections Act, 1996, S.O. 1996, c. 32, Sched.

- The municipal clerk shall ensure that each voting place is accessible to electors with disabilities.
- The clerk shall prepare a plan regarding the identification, removal, and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities and shall make the plan available to the public before voting day in a regular election.

The Blind Persons Rights Act

Blind Persons' Rights Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. B.7

Ongoing Review of this Plan

Ongoing review and feedback are important for this plan to stay effective. Grey Highlands will continue to collect feedback and implement changes that will enhance

the accessibility of its services. Members of the public are encouraged to make comments on this plan and accessibility matters in general.

Additionally, this plan will be reviewed by the Accessibility Coordinator annually and annual status reports will be provided to the Grey County Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee and Grey Highlands Council.



Appendix A: Preventative and Emergency Maintenance of Accessible Elements in Public Spaces

Grey Highlands has procedures for preventative and emergency maintenance of accessible elements in its public places. Accessible public space elements maintained by the Municipality include:

- Accessible parking
- Exterior paths of travel (walkways, sidewalks, stairs, ramps etc. that fall outside of the Ontario Building Code)
- Service counters
- Recreational trails and lookouts

Maintenance Procedures

The Senior Management Team is responsible for ensuring the maintenance of accessible elements. Preventative maintenance schedules will be developed as required to ensure accessible elements are in good working order and will outline how they will be restored if they become unavailable.

Notices of service interruption will inform the public of any disruption to accessible elements due to planned maintenance or unplanned disruption. When planned, notices will be posted in advance and will provide information about the disruption, its duration and a description of alternate accessible elements that may be available. The notice must be posted in a conspicuous place such as a front entrance as well as on the Grey Highlands' website if circumstances require it.

Accessible elements of public spaces and buildings will be inspected on a regular basis. Elements that are found to have defects or need maintenance will be identified and reported to Senior Management. Management will develop a plan to correct the defect. If other staff members discover issues with accessible elements, or receive feedback from the public about issues, they will notify a member of the Senior Management Team.

If an accessible element requires emergency maintenance or repairs, it will be taken out of service. Necessary repairs will be assessed and addressed based on priority.