

Accessibility Improvement Grant Program Guidelines

1.0 Grant Details

The purpose of the Accessibility Improvement Grant Program is to promote improvements to properties for the purposes of enhancing accessibility in the built environment. It is intended that any improvements considered under this program will meet or exceed the requirements of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and the Ontario Building Code (OBC). The Municipality will fund 50% of the total project cost (excluding taxes) up to \$5,000.

2.0 Usage of Funds

Funding may be used towards exterior and interior accessibility improvements at commercial, industrial, or agricultural properties. Projects that undertake improvements to existing accessibility features, or that propose to implement new accessibility improvements are both considered eligible.

3.0 Eligible Improvements

Eligible costs for the Accessibility Grant include the installation of:

- Ramps;
- Elevators;
- Lifts;
- Automatic door openers;
- Guards and Handrails;
- Any other improvements that improve accessibility and remove barriers, as approved by the Municipality.

The services of a professional engineer, architect, or planner to design and implement the project will also be considered eligible costs; however, the maximum amount of a grant for such services shall not exceed 15% of the grant.

4.0 Ineligible Costs

- New building construction
- Permits required for improvements (e.g. Building)

5.0 Eligibility Criteria

1. Applicants must be a merchant or commercial/industrial property owner within the Community Improvement Project Area.
2. Accessibility improvements associated with agricultural uses are eligible so long as the building is being used for farmgate or agri-tourism purposes and is open to the visiting public.
3. Improvement projects within Commercial Focus Areas will be prioritized.
4. Applicants may be eligible for one accessibility improvement grant per storefront. Applicants may additionally apply for the Façade Improvement Program; Signage Improvement Program; Vacant or Underutilized Properties Conversion/Expansion Program; and/or Agri-Business Innovation Program if the project meets the program requirements.
5. Improvements to the facades of buildings that are designated under Part IV or Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act must be approved by the Huron East Heritage Committee. Grant monies will not be awarded if the project is not approved by the Heritage Committee.
6. The subject property shall not be in a position of tax arrears and not have any outstanding orders or non-conformity with zoning.
7. Only grant applications that comply with municipal by-laws will be considered.

8. Projects may require a Building and/or Sign Permit. Permits must be issued before the project commences. Applicants that have commenced work prior to obtaining a Building Permit, acknowledge that their project may be deemed ineligible for funding. Approval of a grant will not guarantee that a Building or Sign Permit will be issued.
9. Improvements requiring a variance will not be considered unless unique circumstances (not caused or created by the applicant) exist.
10. Improvements must not interfere with sidewalk maintenance and pedestrian safety; which include proper height and allowable encroachment onto the sidewalk.
11. Projects should not have commenced prior to the awarding of the requested grant. Applicants that have commenced work prior to obtaining approval for the requested grant, acknowledge that their project may be deemed ineligible for funding.
12. Projects must be completed by the end of the year in which the funding was received. Extensions are not granted unless prior approval has been received. If money is not spent it will be deemed an incomplete project and you will need to reapply next year.
13. Applicants must provide a minimum 50% cash contribution towards the total cost of the project for which they are applying for a grant.
14. Taxes are the full responsibility of the applicants.
15. Eligible project costs must be actual cash outlay to third parties acting at arms' length and which can be documented through original invoices or proofs of payment. An exception may be granted for a property owner that wishes to do the work themselves; however, eligible project costs may only include material costs and not labour.
16. Exterior improvement projects within a Commercial Focus Area must demonstrate a contribution to the overall quality of the streetscape of the community.

6.0 Review Criteria

The Municipality of Huron East Community Improvement Program Committee will review applications against the following criteria:

- date/timing of the application
- balance of funding available and any previous applications made at the time of application
- project's potential to provide long term economic benefit to the Municipality
- evidence of the applicant's ability to fulfill responsibilities related to the project installation and maintenance
- project's location in relation to the Commercial Focus Areas
- project's "fit" with the objectives of the Community Improvement Plan
- project's "fit" with the character of the building and its' surroundings

7.0 Application Process

Applicants must complete an application in order to be given grant consideration. Incomplete applications cannot be accepted. If approved, funds will be allocated following completion of project and proof of eligible expenditures.

Applications require the following:

- Property owner name
- Contact information
- Detailed project description including colours/materials that will be used
- Sketches, rendering and/or pictures of proposed project (must include "before" photo)
- If your project includes sign text, please show the text to be included

- The proposed timeline for the work (start date, completion date)
- Quote(s) of the project cost
- Proposed project costs (taxes not included)
- Grant request

Applications to this Program are available at the Huron East Municipal Office or online on the Municipality's website: <https://www.huroneast.com>.