



Designed by Stanley Roscoe, opened in 1960

Designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act in 2006 for its architectural, historic and contextual value

Integrating Accessibility in Heritage Properties

Case Study: Hamilton City Hall

Main Street West Hamilton Ontario



The 1959 Landscape Design by Project Planning Limited divided the site into an area for vehicle access and parking and a separate civic space for pedestrians which featured 7 different levels with multiple stairs and retaining walls.

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Designated heritage attributes include “the multiple levels and topography, retaining walls and stairs, the elevated pedestrian bridge, railing and staircases.”

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New legislation is aimed at removing barriers to access in the built environment for persons with physical or sensory disabilities.

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Accessibility standards require 70% tonal contrast and use of texture to signal changes in grade. Placement of site furniture may also impact an accessible route.

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The Building Code and accessibility standards require protection on walls over 600 mm.

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Heritage legislation requires that any alteration or additions such as new handrails, railings and signage inserted in the landscape receive approval from the heritage committee and municipal council.

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The design and location of the 14 new ramps that were added were planned to minimize the visual impact on the designated heritage landscape.

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Consultation and dialogue with the municipal accessibility committee identified where there were potential conflicts between accessibility standards, local guidelines and the conservation of the designated attributes.

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Accessibility standards allow exceptions if compliance would cause substantial harm to cultural, historic, religious, or significant natural features or characteristics..

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Heritage approval was given for the addition of handrails to the plaza since the overall visual character of the plaza was not significantly impacted. The 1960 paving pattern provides a tonal and texture contrast at the top and bottom of the stairs.

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Dark grey paint strips mark the edge of the treads to assist the visually challenged visitor. The restored and renewed plaza continues to be a major civic open space in the urban core.

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New standards for ramp slopes range from 1:10, 1:12, 1:15; 1:20 or 1:25 with varying requirements for width, handrails, curbs, and landings. Creative landscape design can provide an "acceptable solution to accomplish the intended results of accessibility" without impacting on the integrity of the heritage property.

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The completed project represents a balance of conserving heritage attributes and the integration of new features that will make the landmark complex accessible to a wider range of citizens. The project was the 2011 recipient of the CAHP Award for the Conservation of a Historic Landscape.

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