

Staff Report

Presented By: Kristan Shrider, Director, Community Services
Meeting Date: November 10, 2025
Subject: Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification
Attachment(s): None

Recommendation

That Council receive the Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification report for information.

Report Summary

Investigation of the Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification was identified as a 2025 Division Highlight for Community Services. This report outlines the research, criteria, and requirements of the program as well as the potential resources required for implementation. The report recommends that the Town not invest financially with the facility certification program at this time based on the analysis contained in the report.

Background/Analysis

The Rick Hansen Foundation (RHF) was established in 1988, following the Man in Motion World Tour, which spanned 26 months and over 40,000kms. For over three decades, Rick Hansen and his foundation have focused on raising awareness, changing attitudes, and funding spinal cord injury research and care.

Approximately, one in four Canadians identify as having a disability, and as the population ages, that number continues to increase. The RHF is striving to breakdown one of the most fundamental barriers that people with disabilities face – physical barriers in the places where we live, work, learn, and play.

The Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification (RHFAC) is a rating system that measures and certifies the level of meaningful access of buildings and sites and how to identify and improve barriers for the community, customers, and employees.

Identified as a 2025 Division Highlight for the Department of Community Services, this report outlines the research, criteria, requirements and potential resources required if direction is

provided for staff to identify the RHFAC program in a future Business Plan for Council consideration.

What is RHFAC

The RHFAC program provides building owners and operators a holistic, practical, and people-focused framework to measure meaningful access, create a roadmap for improvements, and celebrate their commitment to making their spaces accessible for all. Rationale and benefits for companies obtaining an RHFAC rating and certification include but are not limited to:

- Demonstrate leadership in putting people first.
- Gain competitive advantage by attracting more diverse visitors, staff, and customers.
- Future proof buildings in a rapidly changing world.
- Discover the meaningful access of building (s) and effectively manage accessibility improvements.

Certification Level and Requirements

The RHFAC offers two levels of certification (Appendix A outlines the prerequisites for each):

- RHF Accessibility Certified Gold
 - Achieve gold certification prerequisites rating score of 80% or higher for existing sites or pre-construction review.
- RHF Accessibility Certified
 - Achieve certification prerequisites rating score of 80% or higher for existing sites.
 - Achieve certification prerequisites rating score between 60% to 79% for pre-construction review.

Steps to Obtain Certification

There are six steps to obtain certification for either level of the RHFAC program (Appendix B outlines a breakdown of details and associated costs for each step):

1. Create organization account.
2. Register the site(s).
3. Hire an RHFAC professional to conduct the rating.
4. Submit rating for adjudication.
5. Receive and celebrate certification.
6. Maintain certification.

RHFAC Rating Survey and Ontario Building Code Requirements

The RHFAC rating survey is the questionnaire utilized by RHFAC professionals to rate the features of a site and determine the rating score. The rating survey was developed and reviewed on a regular basis by a broad scope of partners and shareholders to ensure the latest version is current with innovation, legislation, and best practices.

Areas of focus of the RHFAC rating survey (latest version v4.0) includes but is not limited to:

- Vehicular access.
- Exterior approach and entrance.
- Interior circulation.
- Interior services and environment.
- Sanitary facilities.
- Wayfinding and signage.

- Emergency systems.
- Additional use of space.
- Residential units.
- Trails and pathways.
- Mind-friendly environments.
- Technology and innovation.

Although the Ontario Building Code (OBC) has included barrier-free design provision since 1975, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disability Act, 2005 (AODA) was the driving force behind the 2015 amendments to significantly enhance accessibility requirements for new construction and extensive renovations in the OBC. The amendments do not have retroactive effect; however, the new requirements apply to newly constructed buildings and those that undertake extensive renovations.

The new and updated requirements for new construction include:

- requirements for visual fire alarms to be installed in all public corridors of multi-unit residential buildings and in all multi-unit residential suites;
- requirements for all smoke alarms in all buildings, including houses, to include a visual component;
- requirements for an elevator or other barrier-free access to be provided between storeys in most buildings, with some exemptions for buildings such as small residential and business occupancy buildings;
- requirements for power door operators to be provided at entrances to a wider range of buildings, at entrances to barrier-free washrooms, and at entrances into common rooms in multi-unit residential buildings;
- updated requirements for barrier-free washrooms;
- new requirement for at least one universal washroom for every building;
- requirements for barrier-free access to public pools and spas; and
- updated requirements for accessible and adaptable seating spaces in assembly Buildings.

It is noted that the OBC amendment also requires all extensive renovations, including in smaller suites or suites not located on a fully accessible floor level, will be required to include certain barrier-free upgrades, such as wider clear door widths, visual cues for glass doors, and provision of an ambulatory accessible washroom stall.

RHF Municipal Accessibility Toolkit

The RHF had provided a resource to assist municipalities to create policies and implement changes that foster inclusivity and compliance with provincial standards by creating a Municipal Accessibility Policy (MAP) [Toolkit](#). The toolkit is divided into four (4) sessions that offer a framework to improve accessibility policy in the municipal environment by reviewing strategic goals, identifying gaps and opportunities, and creating business cases for consideration. This is a great resource for municipalities and Accessibility Advisory Committees.

Potential Scenario

To illustrate the fees and commitment of the RHFAC program, the chart below outlines the cost if direction were provided to enroll one Town owned facility:

Program Element	Cost * Fees effective July 1, 2024.
Create Account	\$0
Register Site	\$500
RHFAC Professional Rating Survey	TBD
Adjudication Fee	\$2,500
Decals	\$1,000
Annual Fee (for 10 years)	\$2,400
Total	\$6,400

Accessibility Advisory Committee

The Town has an Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) consisting of up to 3 volunteer members, 2 members of Council (1 alternate) and staff resources from the Clerk's Division. The AAC's [Mandate](#) along with the [Accessibility Plan](#) can be found on the Town website. The evolution of accessibility in Saugeen Shores is moving beyond meeting legislative requirements and into a phase of maintaining and including accessibility considerations on an operational basis. The area of focus for the AAC in their current workplan is on creating assets and collecting information for residential homeowners who want to create a more barrier free home, over and above the legislative requirements. The AAC will be conducting facility tours in 2026 to identify opportunities for improving barrier free access to the Town facilities. Each term of the AAC alternates between facility tours and tours of outdoor public spaces. In 2026, the AAC will also be asked to comment on opportunities for improved accessibility during the Municipal Election and provide feedback as a follow-up to the Municipal Election, which includes a specific use assessment of Town facilities and services.

Summary

New or large renovation projects of Town owned buildings meet or exceed the OBC, in with regard to accessibility features and amenities where possible. An internal audit of existing buildings is included in the AAC workplan to identify any barriers relating to accessibility. Even though the RHFAC measures the level of meaningful access beyond the building code, at this time it is not recommended to invest financially with the facility certification program for any Town owned buildings. The resources available will assist the AAC and facility staff to ensure proper facility audits are complete and if required, a capital plan to complete the necessary upgrades for Council consideration.

Linkages

- Strategic Plan Alignment: Pillar 4: Fostering a Vibrant Place to Live and Visit
- Business Plan Alignment: Community Services Division Highlight

Financial Impacts/Source of Funding

No costs or revenue is associated with this report.

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Approved By: Kara Van Myall, Chief Administrative Officer

Appendix “A” – Certification Prerequisites

RHF Accessibility Certified Gold

- Designated accessible parking space(s), if parking is provided for Site users;
- Access to public transit, if the Site is located in an area serviced by transit;
- Accessible path(s) of travel leading to building or trail entrance and throughout the building or trail;
- An accessible primary entrance for public and staff (if separate);
- Access to all floors expected to be used by elevator or lift usable by everyone;
- At least one universal washroom;
- Emergency systems with visual and audible fire alarms in both public and private areas;
- Wayfinding strategies in place to navigate throughout the Site;
- Safety warning features, such as tactile attention indicators at the top of stairs and cane-detectable features, if there are overhead or protruding hazards along the path of travel;
- Tactile markings for permanent room identification signs;
- Assistive listening and communication enhancement technologies, when applicable to the Site;
- Accessibility provision(s) for the key functional facilities of the Site; and
- Accessible or adaptable residential unit(s) for each type of units (e.g., bachelor, 1 bedroom, etc.) available, if it is multi-unit residential building.

RHF Accessibility Certified

- An accessible public entrance; and
- Access to all key functional spaces.

Appendix “B” – Steps and Associated Costs to Obtain Certification

1. Create organization account

- Any new organization is required to create an organization account on the RHFAC registry.
- There is currently no cost to create an account.

2. Register the site (s)

- Identify and distinguish (existing or pre-construction) the site (s) that will be registered.
- Registration provides access to an evaluation tool for preliminary rating exercise, collaboration and analysis of the site (s).
- \$500 per site

3. Hire an RHFAC professional to conduct the rating

- In order to submit a rating for adjudication (step 4), there is a requirement to hire an RHFAC professional.
- The professionals are exclusively authorized to submit rating for adjudication following their completion of the rating survey (onsite or drawing review).
- The RHFAC professionals operate independently and set their own rates depending on scope of work.
- The cost to hire an RHFAC professional is unknown.

4. Submit rating for adjudication

- The RHFAC professional will submit the rating for adjudication and will represent the organization for any clarification or inquiries from the adjudicator.
- The review period and rating generally occur within 20 days upon receiving the adjudication fee.
- The adjudication fee per site is \$1,250 (pre-construction site) or \$2,500 (existing site).
- It is noted that certification for pre-construction sites expires when the building receives an occupancy permit. In order to certify the newly constructed building, a new rating as an existing building is required.

5. Receive and celebrate certification

- If the site (s) achieved certification a letter or certification will be issued, the site (s) will be listed publicly on the RHFAC registry and there is an option to utilize the RHFAC marketing toolkit for promotion.
- If the site (s) did not achieve certification or rating review is desired, a request can be made to the RHFAC professional, and if not satisfied a request can be made to the RHFAC for decision.
- The cost to request a rating score review is unknown.
- RHFAC plaque and/or window decal are available to display at the site (s).
- The plaque costs \$787 and the window decals range between \$155 to \$205.

6. Maintain certification

- In order to keep the certification active (may remain active for up to 10 years), the organization is required to maintain an active subscription on the RHFAC registry and to complete an annual maintenance questionnaire.
- The annual subscription fee is \$240 per site.