Supporting architects and urban planners to understand accessibility

Canada – The Global Alliance on Accessible Technologies and Environments (GAATES)

SUMMARY OF PROJECT

The aim of this project is to support architects, urban planners, and engineers as well as small businesses to help them understand their obligations under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), and also to support them in the implementation process. The GAATES project team, which consists of people with various disabilities, developed a set of publications, a technology vendor database, and learning and reference resources – all written in plain language and accessible online. .

QUOTE

"The resources developed through this project provide architects and other design professionals in Ontario with the information they need to create public spaces that comply with AODA legislation and are truly accessible to persons with disabilities."

—Mr. Bob Topping, GAATES

FACTS & FIGURES

- The various project publications have been downloaded more than 8,250 times.

- The ICT vendor database is accessed about 150 times per month, over 5,000 times to date.

- Since the launch of the website, 70 design professionals have subscribed to it.
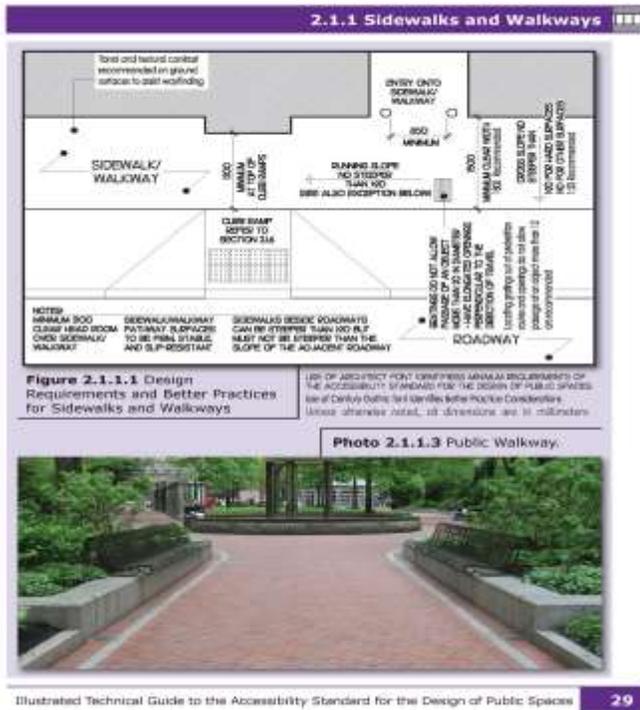
PROBLEMS TARGETED

In 2005, the government of Ontario, Canada, passed the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, which has the purpose of improving accessibility standards for Ontarians with physical and mental health disabilities. To small businesses and in particular to architects, landscape architects, urban planners, engineers, and other design professionals this statute was complex and its content largely unknown.

SOLUTION & METHODOLOGY

To address the lack of understanding of the new legislation, the project staff have developed a number of publications, an information and communication technology vendor database, as well as learning and reference resources consisting of an online course and an illustrated technical guide. The publications, which are all available in accessible formats, support the target group to make clear their obligations under the new law and to show how especially small businesses can provide information to their clients in formats that are accessible to everyone and how they can communicate with their clients in a way that is inclusive. The vendor database gives businesses the opportunity to search for expertise within specific areas regulated by the AODA. For example, if a business looks for a sign language interpreter or a company to create accessible documents, it can use these terms as search criteria and the database will provide contact information for vendors who can provide the services. The online course, which costs 100 Canadian dollars (appx. US$72), focuses on the AODA Accessibility Standard for the Design of Public Spaces (AODA-DOPS), and provides an overview of the obligations of businesses to comply with the AODA-DOPS and the technical requirements of the legislation. The course was developed on a fully accessible learning platform. The various resources and the online course have been developed under the guidance of a steering committee that represents various professional associations of Ontario and includes people with disabilities. The project is financed by the Government of Ontario's Enabling Change Programme.

OUTLOOK & TRANSFERABILITY

GAATES will continue to offer the various publications free-of-charge through the GAATES website, as well as the for-fee online course. The lessons learned in creating fully accessible publications and a fully accessible online course will be transferred to other projects of GAATES.

Figure 2.1.1.1 Design Requirements and Better Practices for Sidewalks and Walkways

Photo 2.1.1.3 Public Walkway.

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