Get to know three Accessibility Advisory Committee Members!

My name is Catherine Kenwell, and I moved back to Barrie seven years ago, after growing up here and then living in Toronto for 30 years. I’m a qualified mediator and author, and I also work at ZuZu Fashion Boutique in downtown Barrie.

I wear a lot of hats—mostly because I have a lot of interests! But I also discovered, after a series of brain injuries, that I no longer have the desire or the gumption to work full time. I’m focusing on writing, and in 2020 I co-authored NOT CANCELLED: Canadian Kindness in the Face of COVID-19 with Heather Down.

I am fortunate to be able to work the way I do. I live with ‘a broken brain’, mood disorders, and PTSD, and I have had to navigate a new way of working that doesn’t mentally and cognitively exhaust me. Some day I’d love to create working environments that allow neurodivergent people to shine. On my ‘to-do’ list is a program for employers that helps them understand expectations around concussed and brain-injured employees returning to the workplace.

I became interested in accessibility issues in my former role at the Canadian College of Naturopathic Medicine. As part of a small team, I took part in developing the college’s accessibility standards for students and for the patients visiting the onsite clinic.

When I moved back to Barrie, I joined the City’s Accessibility Advisory Committee because I am interested in making the city a more accessible living space. That means creating new types of playgrounds for children, bringing initiatives like Volt hockey to Barrie, and offering wheelchair-access gardening and beach areas. Despite the challenges of the past two years, the ACC worked on and achieved these initiatives in partnership with Council and other stakeholders.

While the ACC is primarily focused on helping our citizens with disability issues, we understand that accessibility to housing is entwined with our goals. We review development proposals and offer recommendations to create safer, more physically accessible and residences and public areas.

That’s exciting work, right?

I love living in Barrie, and I’m so glad we returned. I’m a few blocks from the natural beauty of the North Shore and Kempenfelt Bay, I work and support our vibrant, growing downtown, and together we have an opportunity to build Barrie into an even better, more diverse, and more accessible community.
Hi everyone my name is **Louise Pope**. It is hard to believe that I have lived for over thirty years in Barrie. I worked in the community health and social services field after obtaining a post graduate degree in social work.

Following retirement, I have enjoyed volunteering and along with two remarkable volunteers we developed a not for profit, later life learning organization. Third Age Barrie Lifelong Learning Association, [www.thirdagebarrie.ca](http://www.thirdagebarrie.ca), is now in its ninth year of presenting three lectures series a year.

I applied for the Accessibility Committee with the goal of providing input and support for the City’s accessibility initiatives whether it is planning for a new building, subdivision or development of the official plan. As well, in my professional life I worked with both children and adults with diverse disabilities. I, myself have a balance and mobility impairment.

My pet peeves are: ramps that are not built to provincial codes, steps that too high, entrances that are not accessible as well as washrooms; and poor sound systems for the hard of hearing. When out with friends, they now wait to see how long it takes for me to quietly point out inaccessible features and suggestions for improvement to the appropriate person.

The redevelopment of the downtown has built into it many excellent accessible features and I look forward to the redesign of St. Vincent Park especially with its accessible swing. Earlier Accessibility Committees advocated strongly for curb cuts and audible signals at major crossroads and the City of Barrie listened and implemented these accessible safety features.

I look forward to continued recognition and improvements in accessibility in Barrie. Thank you to my fellow committee members, Cheryl Dillon and Tammie Maynard City of Barrie staff, and Councillor Robert Thomson for sharing their expertise and support for the Accessibility Committee.
My name is Marie Francis. I have lived in Barrie since I was born 34 years ago. I am a mother of two children and have just completed my degree in disability studies.

I was interested in joining the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) because I am incredibly passionate about how design affects human behaviour and how we can improve access and quality of life through our choices as a community. As a wheelchair user, my biggest pet peeve is the lack of curb cuts where I need them. I hate having to take ridiculous routes to find places to move from one sidewalk to another or off the sidewalk, especially on a busy street or parking lot when I am with the kids. Some of the options end up being unsafe, particularly when you are less visible because you are in a seated position. I am the newest member of the committee, so I haven’t seen as many projects through as other members have, but I am very proud of our work and especially our contributions to planning and design.

I love the waterfront and am excited to work towards better access for everyone, this would include washrooms, ways to get in the water, and shade in a variety of locations around the city. It has been wonderful to watch Centennial Park become a real leader in accessibility over the years and it is definitely the location I would recommend to anyone in a wheelchair. With two little kids, accessible parks are important to us. Sunnidale firefighter park is one of our favourites, but the city now has several excellent options.

I love the progress we are making as a city. It’s been awesome to watch our city become a more amazing place every year: with more options, more connections, and greater accessibility. We still have a lot of work to do—for example—accessible, affordable housing is critical right now, but I am optimistic that, as a city we really care about including our residents and we will make choices to enable everyone participate as equitably as possible.