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# MAKING HERITAGE SITES ACCESSIBLE: FOOL'S PARADISE

MSL4000 MUSEUM STUDIES  
CAPSTONE PROJECT

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FIDUCIE DU PATRIMOINE ONTARIEN

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## 01

# PROJECT OVERVIEW

The original home and studio of Canadian landscape artist, writer, and educator, Doris McCarthy (1910-2010), was donated to the Ontario Heritage Trust (OHT) in 1998. The result of this donation was the development of a creative space for all artists through the Doris McCarthy Artist-in-Residence (DMAiR) program. This program, created by the OHT and sponsored by RBC, welcomes Canadian artists to live and work in the same space that inspired McCarthy.

Fool's Paradise, the name of McCarthy's eclectic home, was created to suit the specific needs of the artist. Unfortunately, its architecture and interior design places significant accessibility barriers on the space that prevent artists with disabilities from being able to participate in the DMAiR program. The purpose of this report is to identify these barriers and provide solutions to make Fool's Paradise, as well as the DMAiR program, accessible to a broader public.

Throughout the project, the student team completed three site visits to Fool's Paradise in Scarborough to inspect the site, conducted interviews with experts at the OHT to learn about the heritage features of the property, conducted research into AODA standards and other provincial standards for building accessibility, conducted community engagement interviews with identified priority community groups, and developed a report that provides the OHT with feasible accessibility recommendations they can implement in the future.



## 02

# DEFINITIONS OF CONCEPTS

## ACCESSIBILITY

Accessibility refers to “the design of products, devices, services or environments so as to be usable by persons with or without disabilities and includes information and communications” ([United Nations 2019](#)). While this includes creating a barrier-free environment, it goes beyond physical accessibility. In this report, we will incorporate all aspects of accessibility, for both visible and invisible disabilities. Through our research and interviews with community members, what has emerged is how important it is to see accessibility as a process that is ever-evolving and being improved upon. It is not a destination or an end point. It is never done. In this same understanding, we must not see a space as inaccessible or accessible, but rather see the barriers within a space and how we can work to remove those barriers to increase accessibility.

## MEDICAL MODEL:

This model of disability sees disabilities as “a health condition that needs to be fixed or cured” ([United Nations 2019](#)). This is the model that has historically dominated conversations around accessibility. However, it defines individuals as disabled by their differences and suggests these differences need to be changed through medical treatment. It sees access as the issue of an individual, rather than the issue of society. In order to see a more accessible society, we must move to a social model.



# 03

## SOCIAL MODEL:

This model of disability “frames disability as a social construct created by access barriers in the environment, rather than a medical ‘problem’” ([Zbitnew, n.d.](#)). Using this model, we can identify issues which exclude people with disabilities and find ways to remove these barriers and increase access for everyone. This is the model we will be using when writing this report. We want to find barriers at Fool’s Paradise and remove as many as possible to make the site and the DMAiR program accessible to as many people as possible.

## DISABILITY JUSTICE:

Disability justice is a movement which was born from the first Disability Rights Movement. The Disability Rights Movement established civil rights for people with disabilities. Disability justice builds on this while incorporating a more intersectional approach. According to Sins Invalid, disability justice understands that (Sins Invalid 2020):

- All bodies are unique and essential;
- All bodies have strengths and needs that must be met;
- We are powerful, not despite the complexities of our bodies, but because of them;
- All bodies are confined by ability, race, gender, sexuality, class, nation state, religion, and more, and we cannot separate them.

## ACCESS FRICTION:

Access friction refers to the “challenges and barriers that individuals face when trying to access resources, services, or activities” (“[Access Friction Explained](#)” 2023). It was coined by disabled designer, writer, and critic, Liz Jackson, and is meant to emphasize that people with disabilities do not need to be saved or fixed ([George Brown College, n.d.](#)). Access friction can occur when serving one access need creates a barrier for someone else. It emphasizes the need for flexibility, communication and collaboration when increasing accessibility in public spaces.

# 04

## RESEARCH AND METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the research used in this report was to assist the student team in better understanding accessibility design needs from a user-centered perspective and how these designs could be implemented into Fool's Paradise in the short-term to long-term future. To research the options available that would assist Fool's Paradise in becoming accessible to a broader public, more specifically individuals with identified disabilities, the student team referenced a variety of information sources.

The student team's preliminary research consisted of grey literature review, in which the team reviewed webinars, videos, social media forums, blog posts, and other non-academic web-based materials. Blogs and social media forums proved to be a useful source, as they were predominantly written in a first-person perspective, which provided the student team with a deeper understanding of accessibility barriers encountered and different lived experiences. Recorded webinars, virtual workshops, and Ted Talks provided the student team with case studies and insight into how other heritage institutions, or other institutions, are undertaking accessibility improvement projects and renovations. These online resources assisted the student team in gaining a deeper understanding of lived experiences, current practices, and the challenges of accessibility in heritage buildings.

# 05

## RESEARCH AND METHODOLOGY

The student research team conducted three site visits to Fool's Paradise while conducting experiential research. The initial site visit allowed the student research team to develop a preliminary suggestion list based on the knowledge gained from grey literature review and experiencing the accessibility barriers of Fool's Paradise firsthand. During the second site visit, the student research team examined the house critically, consequently revising and building upon the initial list of suggestions to improve the accessibility of the house for individuals with visible and/or invisible disabilities. The third, and final, site visit was to collect quantitative data to inform the student team's report, primarily measurements to compare with those required by the provincial government's standards and guidelines. Through the Ontario Heritage Trust, the student team also toured the Ontario Heritage Trust office space, George Brown House, and the Enoch Turner Schoolhouse. These tours exhibited the accessibility measures integrated at other sites owned by the Ontario Heritage Trust and allowed the student team to understand what accessibility features are feasible to suggest. The student team also participated in an iSkills workshop hosted by the University of Toronto, which discussed the application of universal design to make libraries, museums, and gallery spaces accessible. The experiential learning phase was an important foundation for the student team's findings and suggestions that were solidified by the research conducted for the literature review.

## 06

## RESEARCH AND METHODOLOGY

The resources referenced during the student team's literature review were collected using the University of Toronto Libraries online database, Google Scholar, Government of Canada Publications search engine, Government of Ontario's Publications Ontario search engine, and through meetings with our project partner, mentor, and community members. A source the student team largely referenced when developing suggestions for Fool's Paradise were Government documents and reports about provincial standards and guidelines. Specifically, the Ontario Building Code (Government of Ontario 2023), Guidelines for Barrier Free Design of Ontario Government Facilities (Infrastructure Ontario 2023), and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (Government of Ontario, 2005). These resources outline specific measurements in which fixtures must be hung, widths of doorways, appropriate slope angles, etc., in which the student team included in the suggestions. To ensure the team's research was holistic, the student team simultaneously reviewed academic works that outline the design needs of individuals with visible and/or invisible disabilities.

The final research phase included conducting interviews with individuals and organizations identified by the student team, project mentor, and project partner. When identifying community members to consult with, the student team preferred the individual aligned with at least one of the following priority communities: artists and community members with lived experience; scholars and/or academics working in disability justice or accessibility disciplines; museum/heritage professionals. In total, the student team conducted seven community consultations with individuals that aligned with the identified priority communities. As a result, the student team developed connections with various communities impacted by these changes, provided with new perspectives on topics within the fields of disability justice and accessibility, and gained a profound knowledge of accessibility that informed the suggestions provided in this report.

## 07

# CURRENT ACCESSIBILITY OF FOOL'S PARADISE

## ACCESSIBLE FEATURES:

- 1.No interior stairs allows for more people to easily move throughout the house.
- 2.Tile in the large studio is ideal flooring for mobility devices.
- 3.Both the large studio and living room are quite large rooms, which could be easily maneuvered and offer versatility in the range of activities possible within the spaces if reorganized.
- 4.The Heating/AC system operates efficiently and quietly.
- 5.The house is quiet and restful, which is beneficial for neurodivergent visitors, as well as those with sound sensitivities.
- 6.A Matterport virtual tour provides online access to the house.



# 08

## CURRENT ACCESSIBILITY OF FOOL'S PARADISE

### INACCESSIBLE FEATURES:

1. The narrow doors, hallways, kitchen, and bathroom create barriers for individuals with mobility disabilities. Due to this, the house, specifically the bathroom and kitchen, would not be livable for individuals with mobility disabilities.
2. Steps to enter doors, sill plates on doorways, area rugs, uneven paving on patio, gravel driveway, and lack of exterior paths of travel create accessibility barriers for individuals with mobility aids.
3. The lack of grip bars and inconvenient faucet placement in the bathroom makes the space inaccessible for people with mobility disabilities.
4. Dim lighting in the bedroom and living room presents challenges for individuals with low vision or individuals that are blind.
5. There is a lack of assistive technology for artists who are blind or have low vision.
6. The low furniture and beds create accessibility barriers for individuals with mobility, dexterity, or flexibility disabilities.
7. The lack of nearby public transit and limited road parking exacerbate accessibility challenges, especially for those without private transportation.
8. The statement of accessibility on Doris McCarthy Artist in Residency application does not provide the applicant with agency to determine whether the space would work for them.
9. Caregivers are not currently allowed to live with applicants of the DMAiR program.
10. There is no written or illustrated guidance depicting the house's exterior and property.

**ADDRESSING THESE ACCESSIBILITY CONCERNS WOULD GREATLY  
ENHANCE INCLUSIVITY AND ACCOMMODATE A WIDER RANGE OF  
INDIVIDUALS.**

09

## SUGGESTIONS MATRIX

	LOW COST	MEDIUM COST	HIGH COST
SHORT TERM	Develop an access guide	Add more lighting to dim spaces	Pave driveway
	Remove sill plates on doorways	Replace lampshades with more transparent ones	Move furniture out of the building
	Upload a public site map	Make all light switches dimmers	Pave walking paths throughout the property
	Upload audio descriptions for Matterport	External Matterport	Install motorized window shades/blinds
	Allow caregivers in DMAiR program	Increase bed height	
	Install cell reception booster	Replace doorknobs with lever handles	
	Install internet reception booster	Install visual/sound signifier for doorbell and phone	
	Remove rugs	Offer laundry services to artists with disabilities	
	Change language on website		
	Reach-It Sticks		
	Extension cords		
	Remove curtains		
	Install grab bars in bathroom		



10

SUGGESTIONS MATRIX

	LOW COST	MEDIUM COST	HIGH COST
MEDIUM TERM	Bring in community members to consult with them about needs/desires for the space	Switch door hinges so they face outwards	Widen doorways
		Move outlets and light switches to middle wall height	Exterior ramps
		Switch door hinges if blocking light switch	Make bed heights adjustable
LONG TERM	Community advocacy and petitioning	Develop specific accessible programming in Fool’s Paradise	External bathroom and kitchen that are mobility device friendly
	Partnership with Tangled Art		Hire an accessibility coordinator
			Art Bus in collaboration with Scarborough Arts
			Make accessible entrance into large studio

# 11

## WORKING DEFINITIONS OF TIMELINE AND COST

### TIMELINE

#### Short-term

A task that can be organized and completed within a time frame of **one to six months**.

#### Medium-term

A task that can be organized and completed within a time frame of **six months to two years**.

#### Long-term

A task that can be organized and completed within a time frame of **two years or beyond**.

### COST

#### Low Cost

Suggestions categorized as low-cost categories are predicted to cost **a maximum of \$500**.

#### Medium Cost

Suggestions categorized as medium-cost are predicted to cost **between \$500 to \$2,000**.

#### High Cost

Suggestions categorized as high-cost are predicted to cost **\$2,000 or more**.

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## SHORT TERM SUGGESTIONS

## SHORT TERM, LOW COST SUGGESTIONS FOR ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS

**Access Guide**

An access guide, sometimes referred to as a sensory map or a pre-visit guide, is a type of resource that is becoming more popular in museums and cultural spaces. It is a tool that offers “typical information such as bathroom locations and exits” but also sensory information (Pressman and Schulz 2021). In museums, this includes highlighting areas with high lights or loud noises. However, it can include any information to best prepare people for their visit to a site. For example, the Smithsonian, leaders in this practice, offer short documents for each of their museums which explain how to enter the museums, where the bathrooms are, how to get around the museum and some things that one might see in the museum that may surprise them (Smithsonian, n.d.). This could be tailored to fit the needs of the site, to prepare artists or visitors to enter Fool's Paradise and would include materials like the Matterport and floorplans, as well as information about sensory issues, cell reception, and transportation.

This would specifically benefit neurodivergent artists but also artists with any disabilities, as it would allow them to plan their visit, anticipate barriers and mitigate anxiety.

This would be a high impact addition to Fool's Paradise, while not impacting the cultural heritage at all and being very low cost.

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## SHORT TERM SUGGESTIONS

**SHORT TERM, LOW COST SUGGESTIONS FOR ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS****Remove sill plate on doorways**

The sill plates on the exterior and interior doorways at Fool's Paradise are not accessible for individuals with mobility devices. It is suggested in section 1.3.5.8 of *Guidelines for Barrier-Free Design of Ontario Government Facilities* that thresholds should be beveled when they are over 6 mm high (Infrastructure Ontario 2023). AODA standards also state thresholds should be beveled to accommodate different floor materials in a building's interior (Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act 2009). The installation of beveled sill plates on each doorway would remove a tripping hazard and a barrier for individuals using mobility devices. Beveled sill plates can be purchased at most construction and home improvement stores. This would have a medium impact on the cultural heritage, but it would largely improve the accessibility of the space for users with mobility devices.

**Public Site Map**

While the Matterport is an excellent feature to allow visitors to prepare for their visit, making a site map of Fool's Paradise public would provide visitors with even more tools to prepare themselves for their visit. Especially for neurodivergent folks and people with mobility disabilities, knowing exactly how they can navigate a space is important, to allow them to plan their visits, anticipate barriers, and mitigate anxiety.

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# SHORT TERM SUGGESTIONS

## SHORT TERM, LOW COST SUGGESTIONS FOR ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS

### **Audio descriptions of the visuals presented in the Matterport**

This would allow individuals with low vision or blindness to tour the house, as well as get a sense of space prior to their visit and plan accordingly. This would also provide potential Doris McCarthy Artist in Residency applicants with low vision or blindness to determine whether the space would work for them.

### **Allow caregivers to stay at the house with participants in DMAiR**

Many people with disabilities require caregivers for various reasons. By allowing these caregivers to stay at Fool's Paradise during the artists' stay, the program would be more accessible to a broader audience. It would also have no extra cost or impact on the site's cultural heritage.

### **Cell reception booster**

The cell reception at the site can be spotty. This has accessibility implications, as it may create a barrier to communicating with a caregiver or transportation service. These can be purchased from Amazon and are low-cost and have a low impact on the site's cultural heritage.

### **Internet reception booster**

The internet reception at the site can also be spotty. This may create communication barriers with a caregiver or transportation service and access barriers to information while on-site. These can be purchased from Amazon and are low-cost and have a low impact on the site's cultural heritage.

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## SHORT TERM SUGGESTIONS



## SHORT TERM, LOW COST SUGGESTIONS FOR ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS

**Remove rugs**

Rugs are a barrier for individuals with mobility disabilities, especially those using mobility aids. The rugs at Fool's Paradise are not compliant with AODA standards, as they are not level with the floor, creating a tripping hazard and impacting the path of travel for individuals with mobility aids (Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act 2009). It would be beneficial to store rugs on-site, when possible, to remove this barrier. If there are concerns about cultural heritage preventing these from being removed permanently, this could be done on a case-by-case basis, depending on either programming or the needs of the artist living at Fool's Paradise.

Where carpeting cannot be temporarily removed, such as the bedroom or study, the carpeting should be replaced with one that meets the AODA guideline of being firm, densely constructed, and easy for a mobility aid user to move over without difficulty (Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act 2009). This would have a higher impact on the cultural heritage. However, this substitution in carpeting would allow for individuals with mobility devices to move through carpeted rooms.



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## SHORT TERM SUGGESTIONS

## SHORT TERM, LOW COST SUGGESTIONS FOR ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS

**Install corner guards on fixtures with sharp edges**

Installing corner guards on the fixtures with sharp edges would be beneficial for individuals with visible and invisible disabilities living in or visiting the house. Some individuals with disabilities may experience a lack of stamina, fainting spells, a loss in balance, and more, that cause them to fall frequently. The furniture, countertops, and some fixtures in the house have sharp corners that could injure the individual in the event of a fall. To mitigate this risk, corner guards could be installed along the corners of fixtures and furniture. These corner guards are a low-cost, non-permanent risk mitigation that can be purchased from Amazon.

**Change the language on the website to be more specific about accessibility needs**

Instead of saying the building is “inaccessible,” list barriers in the space that may make the space inaccessible to some. This gives back agency to the artists applying if they have a disability. Not all with disabilities experience the same barriers. By listing the barriers in the space, an artist can decide for themselves if the space would work. This would be a high impact and low cost addition to Fool's Paradise, that does not impact the cultural heritage.

**Reach-It sticks**

Many of the cupboards and shelving are too high for some to reach. Similarly, some individuals might struggle to reach lower areas. Adding reach-in sticks is a very low-cost solution that is popular with many individuals with disabilities. It will also require no permanent changes to the house and will not affect its cultural heritage.



## 17

## SHORT TERM SUGGESTIONS

## SHORT TERM, LOW COST SUGGESTIONS FOR ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS

**Extension cords**

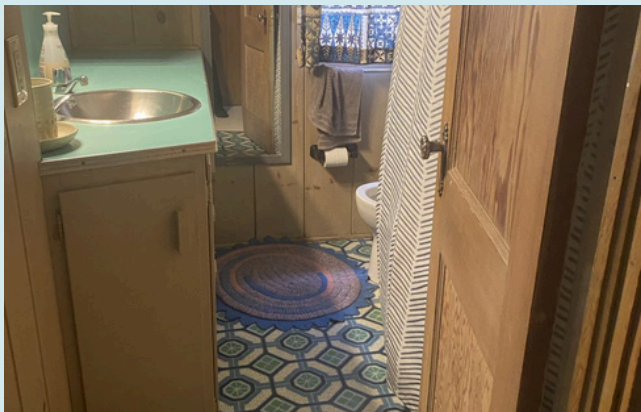
Some artists may need different devices that must be plugged in to support their disability. Similarly, some might struggle to bend down or reach outlets. A low-cost, non-permanent fix would be providing extension cords for artists to use in the space.

**Remove Curtains**

Any curtains touching the ground present a hazard for individuals with mobility devices. Removing the curtains will mitigate this hazard. However, it will impact the cultural heritage of the house, as the curtains are accessioned objects. A low-cost, non-permanent fix would be removing curtains when an artist in residence or visitor informs the Ontario Heritage Trust that they use a mobility device. The curtains could be removed and rehung when necessary.

**Install grab bars in bathroom**

Due to the size of the bathroom, there is very limited renovations that we can do within the space that would increase its accessibility. For example, while installing a wheelchair friendly shower or sink would in theory make the space more accessible, these suggestions would not actually increase accessibility as the space is too small to accommodate any mobility devices. However, installing grab bars is a smaller accommodation that would make the bathroom more accessible to a broader range of people and increase safety in the bathroom.



# 18

# SHORT TERM SUGGESTIONS

## SHORT TERM, MEDIUM COST SUGGESTIONS FOR ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS

### **Add lighting to dim spaces (primarily bathroom, bedroom, and dining room)**

While the house has amazing natural light, the bathroom, bedroom and dining room do not have sufficient lighting for people with low vision, especially at night. While standard lux levels are 160, for someone with low vision, it should be around 350 (VisAbility, 2021). Adding additional lighting would make these spaces more accessible to these artists.

### **Replace lampshades with more transparent ones**

The lampshades on the table-top lamps at Fool's Paradise are thick and nearly opaque, which impacts the brightness and quality of lighting in the space. Like adding lighting, replacing current lampshades with more transparent ones would achieve the same goal, at a lower cost. However, it would have a higher impact on the cultural heritage of Fool's Paradise.

### **Replace current light switches with dimmer light switches**

It would be beneficial to install lights with a dim switch, so the artist in residence, visitor, or program participant can determine the lighting that best suits their needs. According to our research, neurodivergent folks often require different lighting for different purposes or moods – for example, dim lighting for relaxation and brighter lighting for working (blackninkitty 2023). This would have minimal impact on the heritage of Fool's Paradise, as the dimmer light switch could be installed where the original switch was located.

### **External Matterport**

Including the external entry to Fool's Paradise in the Matterport would allow individuals to see the exterior paths of travel on the property and plan accordingly for their visit or stay. Especially for neurodivergent folks and people with mobility disabilities, knowing exactly how they can enter a space is very important, as it allows them to plan their visit, anticipate barriers, and mitigate anxiety.

## 19

## SHORT TERM SUGGESTIONS

## SHORT TERM, MEDIUM COST SUGGESTIONS FOR ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS

**Increase bed heights**

The beds are currently too low to the ground for someone using a mobility device to use, as well as anyone with flexibility or dexterity disability. By increasing bed heights, this barrier would be eliminated. This could be done, either by purchasing new bed frames or buying bed lifts, which are relatively inexpensive.

**Replace doorknobs with lever-style door handles.**

Gripping and turning a door handle to open a door has been recognized as difficult for individuals with mobility, flexibility, and dexterity disabilities – including arthritis, muscular dystrophy, multiple sclerosis, and cerebral palsy (Government of Canada, n.d.). In the *Ontario Government's Guidelines for Barrier-Free Design*, guideline 1.3.5.2 states, “doors shall have lever hardware...that are mounted between 900 to 1100 mm above the finished floor...round knobs and thumb-latches are not acceptable” (Infrastructure Ontario 2023). The doorknobs can be replaced with any lever-style door handle, which can be found on Amazon or any construction supply store using search terms like “lever door handle” or “accessible door handles.” The implementation of this suggestion would have a small impact on the heritage of the site, as the doorknobs would have to be removed and replaced. However, the doorknobs could remain in the collection while the door levers make the features of the house more accessible to residents.



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## SHORT TERM SUGGESTIONS

## SHORT TERM, MEDIUM COST SUGGESTIONS FOR ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS

**Visual/sound signifier for phone, doorbell, smoke and carbon monoxide alarms.**

Individuals with low vision, hearing loss, or those that are deaf or blind may require a visual/sound/sensory signifier when using communication technology at Fool's Paradise. Depending on the needs of the artist in residence and the preference of the Ontario Heritage Trust, there are different solutions. There are numerous companies that provide visual/sound/sensory signifiers for telephone systems. Devices, such as the one offered by Diglo, plug into the existing telephone to amplify the ringer and generate a flashing strobe light to ensure those with low vision or hearing loss are alerted to an incoming call (Diglo 2024). These settings are adjustable, and the device can be unplugged when it is not needed. While this is an economic option, there are bundles that would be accessible for a broader group of residents. A more advanced option of this device is the Sonic Alert HomeAware II Alerting System bundle offered by Canadian Hearing Services (Canadian Hearing Services 2024). This bundle includes an alerting system that acts as clock, alarm clock, smoke/carbon monoxide listener, as well as a display screen alerting user to phone calls, doorbells, home security alarms (if connected), and current weather. The doorbell and super shaker that are included in this package connect to the alerting system, to visually notify the resident of doorbell ring and physically notify the resident of notifications or alarms via vibrations. While this product is offered by the Canadian Hearing Services, it would be an effective device for residents with hearing loss and/or low vision as it has strobe, vibration, audible alert, and an ultra-bright strobe light. Purchasing a device bundle, such as the one suggested or similar, would allow Fool's Paradise to quickly overcome an existent accessibility barrier without impacting the site's heritage.



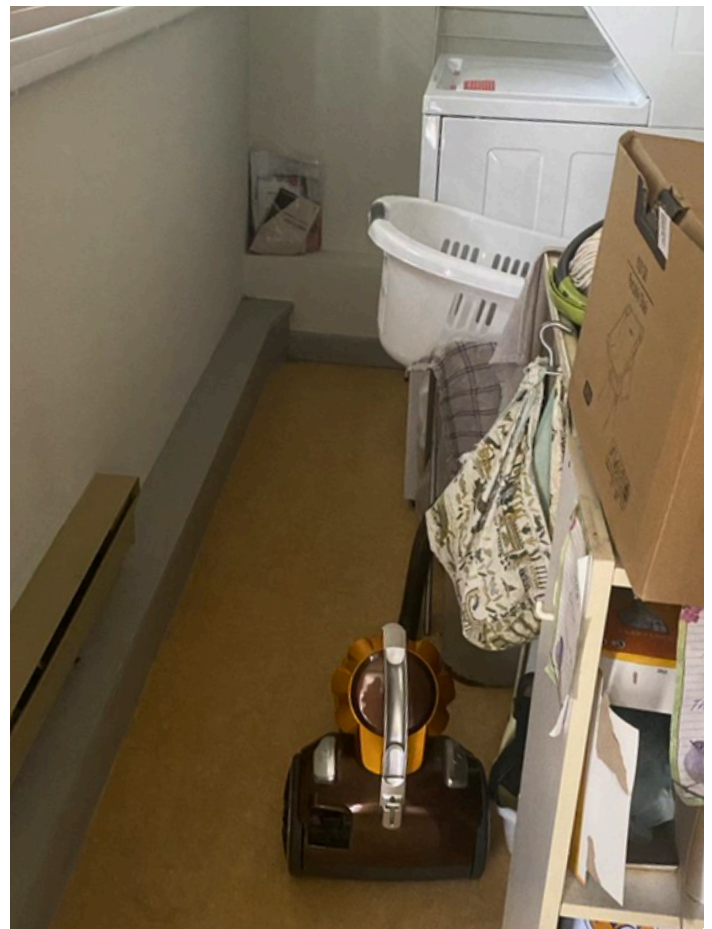
# 21

# SHORT TERM SUGGESTIONS

## SHORT TERM, MEDIUM COST SUGGESTIONS FOR ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS

### **Offer laundry to artists with disabilities**

Currently, the laundry room presents many barriers for anyone with disabilities. Offering laundry services to artists with disabilities who cannot use the laundry room would make the program more accessible. There are many laundry services in Scarborough that also provide pick-up and delivery services, such as Laundry Concierge. A monthly plan can be negotiated between the Ontario Heritage Trust, the artist, and the laundry service provider. Offering laundry services to artists with disabilities would allow Fool's Paradise to quickly overcome an existent accessibility barrier without impacting the site's heritage.



# 22

# SHORT TERM SUGGESTIONS

## SHORT TERM, HIGH COST SUGGESTIONS FOR ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS

### **Paving the driveway**

The gravel driveway is not compliant with AODA standards and creates an accessibility barrier for artists with disabilities participating in the DMAiR program. The driveway should be paved to ensure its compliancy with the AODA standards outlined by section 80.35, section 2, paragraph 3, “the surface is asphalt, concrete, or some other hard surface” (Government of Ontario 2005). Paving the gravel driveway would have a higher impact on the cultural heritage of the site, as paving requires minor excavation. However, paving the driveway allows the exterior path of travel to be more easily maneuvered by a broader range of people, making the space more accessible.

### **Moving furniture out of building**

One of the great features of Fool's for accessibility is how large both the large studio and the dining room are. These are also both rooms that one could enter without having to navigate the very tight hallways and kitchen. However, these rooms, especially the living room, have too much furniture to allow for easy movement in the space. Simply removing some of this furniture, especially around entryways, could make these spaces more accessible. Section 1.1.1.1 of Guidelines for Barrier-Free Design of Ontario Government Facilities states “a clear turning space of a minimum of 59 inches (1500 mm) in diameter shall be provided in locations where persons using mobility devices need to make a 360-degree turn” (Infrastructure Ontario 2023). Currently, the large studio space is the only area that accommodates this. While this would be high cost and have a high impact on the cultural heritage, it would also have a high impact on the space's accessibility. If there are concerns about cultural heritage preventing these being removed permanently, this could be done on a case-by-case basis, depending on either programming or the needs of the artist living at Fool's Paradise.



# 23

# MEDIUM TERM SUGGESTIONS

## MEDIUM TERM, LOW COST SUGGESTIONS FOR ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS

### **Bring in community members to consult with them about needs/desires for the space**

Several interviewees mentioned their interest in visiting the site and potentially offering more detailed consultations onsite. Unfortunately, we did not have the time to facilitate this. While this would not be possible with our interviewees who use mobility devices, this could be a way to continue this work and invite community members in.

## MEDIUM TERM, MEDIUM COST SUGGESTIONS FOR ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS

### **Switching the door hinges so they open outwards**

Doors that open outwards are beneficial to people using mobility devices, as well as increases safety, as this can be a fire hazard. This would have a medium impact on the cultural heritage, as the hinges would have to be moved, leaving an imprint and holes where previously installed. However, these holes can be filled, and the imprint can be covered with paint.

In the instance of a stop on the door jamb, such as the doorway into the living room, the door would require rehanging. This process would include removing the hinges, door, door stop, trim, as well as reinstalling the door, door stop, trim, and hinges so the door opens outwards. This process is subject to change dependent on the door, as there are various possibilities that could impact this process, and subsequently the cultural heritage of the building. A likely possibility is the latch hole will have to be recut on the opposing door jamb and the old latch hole to be filled in. Due to the overall process of rehanging a door, there is also a risk the portions removed and reinstalled get damaged during the process. A carpenter specialized in heritage restoration could be hired to mitigate this risk. Rehanging the doors will have a larger impact on the cultural heritage of the building, as it will require removal and reinstallation of the doors and door frames. Although it would have a larger impact on the cultural heritage of the building, it would be beneficial to the safety and usability of the space.



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# MEDIUM TERM SUGGESTIONS

## MEDIUM TERM, MEDIUM COST SUGGESTIONS FOR ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS

### **Moving outlets and light switches to middle wall height**

For individuals with mobility disabilities or chronic pain, reaching outlets and light switches can be a challenge. Guidelines for Barrier-Free Design of Ontario Government Facilities suggests outlets should be installed at a minimum of 15 ¾ inches (400 mm) from the finished floor (Infrastructure Ontario 2023). Similarly, it is suggested light switches be located between 35 inches (900 mm) and 43 inches (1100 mm) from the finished floor (Infrastructure Ontario 2023). These suggestions are based on these fixtures being accessible to persons using mobility devices using a side approach (Infrastructure Ontario 2023). Removing this barrier by moving outlets and light switches to middle wall height would increase accessibility to the site. This would have a medium impact on the cultural heritage, as the outlet or light switch would have to be moved, leaving an imprint and hole where previously installed. The reinstallation of the outlet or light switch would be similarly invasive. However, moving the outlets and light switches would enhance the accessibility of the space for individuals with mobility disabilities or chronic pain.

### **Switching the door hinges if blocking a light switch**

Like the previous two suggestions, this would make the house easier to maneuver and removes barriers. This would have a medium impact on the cultural heritage, as the hinges would have to be moved, leaving an imprint and holes where previously installed. However, these holes can be filled, and the imprint can be covered with paint. If the door requires rehanging to change the position of the hinges, then it will have a higher impact on the cultural heritage of the building.

# 25

# MEDIUM TERM SUGGESTIONS

## MEDIUM TERM, HIGH COST SUGGESTIONS FOR ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS

### Widen Doorways

The internal doorways at Fool's Paradise are not accessible for individuals with mobility devices, as they are too narrow. Guidelines for Barrier-Free Design of Ontario Government Facilities states, "doors shall be such that frame stops, the door thickness, and horizontal hardware do not reduce the clear width of the doorway to less than 860 mm" (Infrastructure Ontario 2023). Widening the internal doorways that do not meet this accessibility standard would allow individuals with mobility devices to move throughout the house. This would have a significant impact on the cultural heritage, as it requires invasive carpentry work that is permanent. However, this would also have a high impact on the accessibility of the space and the DMAiR program.



# 26

# MEDIUM TERM SUGGESTIONS

## MEDIUM TERM, HIGH COST SUGGESTIONS FOR ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS

### Exterior Ramps

Entrances and exits at Fool's Paradise are only accessible by at least one stair. This makes the interior of the building inaccessible for individuals using mobility devices. Exterior ramps should be installed at the main entrance/exit of the house, the entrance/exit leading to the screened in patio, as well as from the flagstone patio to the property grounds. The requirements for exterior access ramps are listed in Part IV, section 80/24 (1) of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (Government of Ontario 2005). Guidelines for Barrier-Free Design of Ontario Government Facilities lists further guidelines for exterior ramps in section 1.2.4 (Infrastructure Ontario 2023). If installed, any exterior ramps located at Fool's Paradise must comply with these standards. Exterior ramps would allow individuals with mobility devices to access the entrances and exits of the house. This would have a significant impact on the cultural heritage, as it requires invasive construction work that is permanent. However, this would also have a high impact on the accessibility of the space.

A non-permanent and lower cost alternative to exterior ramps is purchasing custom stopgaps from an organization, such as Stopgap Foundation. These are portable ramps constructed with wood to fit site-specific dimensions and can be requested through an online form (Stopgap Foundation, n.d.). The stopgaps could be used when necessary and stored when not. There are some exterior steps that would require stopgaps, specifically the two steps at the main entrance, the one step to the patio, and the one step from the patio into the large studio. A company, such as the Stopgap Foundation, could be hired to complete the stopgaps required for the step to the main patio and the step from the main patio to the large studio doors. The main entrance would require a custom stopgap that accounts for two stairs, which is not advertised on the Stopgap Foundation's website. If the Stopgap Foundation is unable to construct a stop gap for the main entrance, a carpenter could be hired instead. Stopgaps would not have an impact on the cultural heritage and would greatly improve the accessibility of the site.



## 27

## MEDIUM TERM SUGGESTIONS

## MEDIUM TERM, HIGH COST SUGGESTIONS FOR ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS

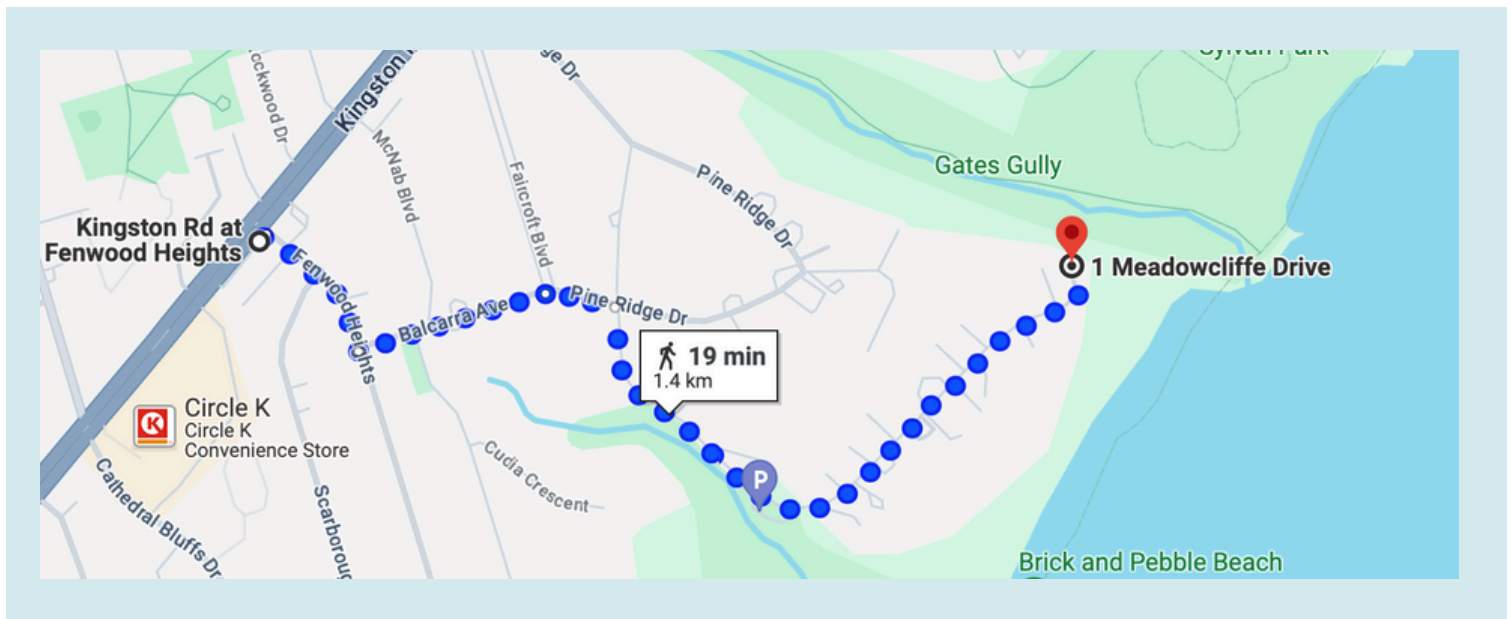
**Make bed heights adjustable**

The beds are currently too low to the ground for someone using a mobility device to use, as well as anyone with a disability which keeps them from bending their knees. By making bed heights adjustable, this barrier would be eliminated, as well as making it more accessible to those who need a shorter bed. This is expensive and seen as an “ideal” accessibility standard, though it should be seen as a nice to have rather than an immediate action item.



## 28

## LONG TERM SUGGESTIONS



## LONG TERM, LOW COST SUGGESTIONS FOR ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS

**Community advocacy and petitioning**

Currently, Fool's Paradise is very hard to get to via public transit. While this might not initially seem like an accessibility issue, it is important to think about accessibility broadly. This limits the program to artists with cars or who are comfortable walking for a longer time. While this isn't within the control of the OHT, community advocacy and campaigning with the city for a TTC/Bus station closer to the house and/or sidewalks and streetlights along the road to the house could remove barriers to participation in the DMAiR program.

## LONG TERM, MEDIUM COST SUGGESTIONS FOR ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS

**Develop specific accessibility programming in Fool's Paradise**

With the current bathroom and kitchen, the space is not livable for anyone with a mobility aid. However, artists using mobility aids or who have other disabilities which limit their ability to live in Fool's Paradise can still be brought into the space through programming. Developing programming that is intentionally inclusive and accessible for artists with disabilities. This would allow individuals unable to participate in the artist in residency program to visit and use the space shorter-term.



## 29

## LONG-TERM SUGGESTIONS

## LONG TERM, HIGH COST SUGGESTIONS FOR ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS

**External bathroom and kitchen that is accessible**

The current bathroom and kitchen are inaccessible to individuals with mobility devices. The renovations required to make these spaces accessible would be expensive and significantly compromise the site's cultural heritage. While consulting with community members, it was suggested that an external bathroom and kitchen be constructed on the property of Fool's Paradise. Constructing an external bathroom and kitchen would allow the Ontario Heritage Trust to develop a universally accessible kitchen and bathroom without being constrained by the limitations of an existing heritage building. This would be an expensive project requiring excavation, lengthy building processes, and would have a significant impact on the site's cultural heritage. However, this would allow individuals with mobility devices to better access the space and participate in the DMAiR program.



## 30

## LONG TERM SUGGESTIONS

## LONG TERM, HIGH COST SUGGESTIONS FOR ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS

**Hire accessibility coordinator for Ontario Heritage Trust Sites**

Currently, there is no full-time accessibility coordinator position at the Ontario Heritage Trust to which the public can direct their accessibility questions and concerns. Hiring an accessibility coordinator for the Ontario Heritage Trust sites would be beneficial, as the individual would provide information about accessibility of the sites and accessibility services, as well as respond to requests for accommodation from the public. Their ability to focus on accessibility full-time would play an integral role in improving accessibility at the Ontario Heritage Trust sites and provide accommodations to artists with disabilities wanting to apply to the DMAiR program.

**Art bus with community**

When consulting with Scarborough Arts about their use of Fool's Paradise for summer programming, they suggested collaborating on an art bus initiative. This would essentially be a shuttle service that would assist visitors in travelling to Fool's Paradise. Implementing a shuttle service, either longer-term for an artist with disabilities participating in the DMAiR program or for specific events, would make Fool's Paradise more accessible to a broader public. The McMichael Canadian Art Collection in Kleinburg, and Visual Arts Centre of Clarington are two good examples providing free art buses to the public for select events.



## 31

## LONG TERM SUGGESTIONS

## LONG TERM, HIGH COST SUGGESTIONS FOR ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS

**Make accessible entrance from outside into large studio**

There is currently a large double door into the main studio that is not in use. This door has the potential to become an accessible entrance, as the doorway is wide enough, and the studio is big enough to accommodate mobility devices. Changes that would need to be made include paving the patio and a walking path to the patio, a ramp into the doors, and mechanical door openers. This would make the site accessible to visitors with mobility devices and could increase programming and outreach potential. However, due to the bathroom and kitchen, it would still not be livable for these community members.



## 32

## RESOURCES TO CONSIDER

**Community Consultations**

- Tangled Art + Disability offers accessibility consultations, Ontario Heritage Trust could work with them to develop an eventual partnership.
- Scarborough Arts
- Local artist groups
- Community consultations to speak about accessibility

**Further Reading**

- Aimi Hamraie, *Building Access: Universal Design and the Politics of Disability* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017).
- Anne Zbitnew, Lenore McMillan, and Fan Odette, "Accessibility Toolkit: A Guide to Making Art Spaces Accessible" (Applied Research & Innovation and the School of Media Studies at Humber College, n.d.), accessed March 15, 2024.
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- Heather Pressman, *An Accessible Past: Making Historic Sites Accessible* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Incorporated, 2023).
- Infrastructure Ontario, "Guidelines for a Barrier-Free Design of Ontario Government Facilities" (Infrastructure Ontario, 2023).





## 33 CONCLUDING STATEMENT

The suggestions provided reflect the accessibility improvements that can be made to Fool's Paradise based on the student team's research, site visits, and community consultations conducted over an eight-month period. These suggestions are strategically outlined from short-term, low-cost to long-term, high-cost accessibility improvements, suggesting the order of action Ontario Heritage Trust can begin implementing the changes in. The list has the potential to grow as more accessibility barriers become apparent to the Ontario Heritage Trust.

Accessibility is an ongoing process that should be seen as an active part of the Ontario Heritage Trust's operations. It isn't a destination, and it is never fully done. If none of our suggestions can be implemented, we hope that this understanding is gained by readers of this document. There are always actions that can be taken, ranging from short to long term and low to high cost, that can remove barriers and increase accessibility in heritage spaces.



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## 36 APPENDIX I: RESEARCH SOURCES

The student team explored numerous research methods and sources to develop the suggestions provided in this report. While this list is not exhaustive, listed below are the frequently referenced sources utilized throughout the various research phases of the project.

### Grey Literature Review

#### YouTube Videos

TEDxTalks, "Why We Need Universal Design | Michael Nesmith | TEDxBoulder," Social Media, YouTube, October 13, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bVdPNWMGyZY>.

AdaptiveGo, "Accessible Kitchen Design Features and Tips," Social Media, YouTube, May 2, 2024, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2\\_p\\_52iggjs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2_p_52iggjs).

BraunAbility, "Universal Design Living Laboratory - A Wheelchair Accessible Home," Social Media, YouTube, November 25, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j3QFGDfWgOU>.

#### Webinars/Recorded Virtual Workshops

Ontario Museum Association, "Webinar: Accessibility Planning for Ontario Museums," Social Media, YouTube, April 27, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AP6k0IJl3EQ>.

Minnesota Historical Society, "Accessibility to Historic Sites; the Decision Process," Social Media, YouTube, June 11, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SYC0FKnlV0A>.

Accessibility and Inclusivity at Museums and Historic Sites, Recorded Webinar, 2016. American Association for State and Local History.

#### Online forums, blogs, networks, and collectives

Reddit: r/accessibility, r/chronicillness. r/blind, r/disability, r/disabled, r/wheelchairs, r/dysautonomia, r/deaf, r/neurodivergent, r/autism. Reddit is a hub for posts about lived experiences with disability, searching the name of the disability is key in finding the subreddit page containing these posts.

The Universal Design Network of Canada, "The Universal Design Network of Canada," The Universal Design Network of Canada, accessed March 14, 2024, <https://universaldesign.ca/>.

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Nicole Belolan, "Disability History," Blog, The Inclusive Historian's Handbook, January 3, 2024, <https://inclusivehistorian.com/disability-history/>.

dis assembly, "History & Mission," dis assembly, accessed March 15, 2024, <https://www.dis-assembly.ca/#historymission>.

## **Programming and resources at cultural institutions centered around disability justice and accessibility**

### **Tangled Art + Disability**

"Crip Times Podcast," Tangled Art + Disability, accessed March 15, 2024, <https://tangledarts.org/whats-on/listing/podcast/>.

"Access Anthology: Reflections on Disability Art and Culture," Tangled Art + Disability, 2023, <https://tangledarts.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Access-Anthology-July-5-2023-screedn-reader-friendly-RGB.pdf>.

"Accessibility Tool Kit" (Tangled Art + Disability), accessed March 12, 2024, <https://tangledarts.org/resources/resource/accessibility-tool-kit/>.

### **Ontario Museum Association**

Ontario Museum Association, "Accessibility & Inclusion," Ontario Museum Association, accessed March 15, 2024, <https://members.museumsonario.ca/resources/tools-for-museum-practice/community#Accessibility%20%20Inclusion>.

## **Experiential Learning**

Mladen Pejic and Ben Poynton, "Making Libraries, Museums, and Gallery Spaces Accessible: Applying Universal Design" part of the iSkills Workshop Series hosted by the Faculty of Information, University of Toronto.

Ontario Heritage Trust building tours

## **Literature Review**

Infrastructure Ontario, "Guidelines for a Barrier-Free Design of Ontario Government Facilities" (Infrastructure Ontario, 2023), <https://www.infrastructureontario.ca/48e26f/contentassets/103710dbb9724f2680bbb7873375d022/barrier-free-design-guidelines-2023-08-01.pdf>.

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Portland State University and Heidi Morgan, "Connections Between Sensory Sensitivities in Autism; the Importance of Sensory Friendly Environments for Accessibility and Increased Quality of Life for the Neurodivergent Autistic Minority," PSU McNair Scholars Online Journal 13, no. 1 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.15760/mcnair.2019.13.1.11>.

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Heather Pressman, *An Accessible Past: Making Historic Sites Accessible* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Incorporated, 2023).

## Community Consultations

Museum Professionals

Academics or scholars working in the disability justice field

Artists and community members with lived experiences