

# Measuring up businesses and homes



Safeway's Danny Viveiros puts up Measuring Up Terrace's sign in the store that says "Imagine being in our place. Please don't Park in our space". The committee is trying to bring more visibility to accessibility issues in the community and is posting the signs around town.

KAT LEE PHOTO

A local committee trying to make the community more accessible has come out with two priorities this year.

"Our focus is to help businesses with accessibility," said Measuring Up Terrace chair Gail Billson.

She said the committee has done as much as it can in terms of ensuring that city facilities are accessible, and now the big projects are to help businesses and new homes become more accessible to people with disabilities or seniors.

"This is the focus for us this year," Billson said.

The two-year-old committee has a new part time coordinator, Denise Walter, who started in September and will be working for as long as the position can be paid for.

The committee has been a big part of the reason why door levers, handles in bathrooms, and more parking signage have been installed in city facilities in the past year.

Committee members are willing to take a tour of businesses and make suggestions for improvements if asked. Billson said the changes don't have to happen all at once, but said it's nice to have a list to refer to.

"We're sort of looking at how some businesses can make changes," she said.

This also includes encouraging construction companies to think about making houses visitable when building new homes. This could be as easy as having no step entrance into the house, or wider doors and hallways for wheelchairs.

"Putting these things in at the beginning of construction isn't a major cost compared to later on," Billson said, pointing out that Terrace is an aging population and these features in homes will be needed later on.

Laurie Ringaert, project director for Measuring up the North, was in town in October, addressing businesses and city council about how to make the community more accessible to people with disabilities, seniors, or even parents pushing buggies around.

She urged council to consider passing a bylaw that would require new homes being constructed to be more accessible.

"If you want to attract people to Terrace in the future, I would focus on businesses and housing," Ringaert told council.

Other places make this work through business award programs, tax incentives, rebates, or waivers for building permits. Council accepted Ringaert's presentation to council for information, but did not discuss the bylaw further.

The committee is also starting a campaign to remind people about not parking in handicap parking spots if they're not eligible.

"It's very frustrating for people in wheelchairs when they have people parked there," Billson said.

Committee members will be putting up some signs that say "Imagine being in our place. Please don't Park in our space" in places around town as a reminder that the spots are only for those who need it.

"It's just something as a reminder for people to please consider," Billson said.

Billson said the committee is honing in on these specific issues from the feedback from the community collected in a survey last year.

"There are so many things that we could look at," she said, but explained that they're trying to do what they can to help the town in the long-term.

"We keep plugging away at stuff trying to make some things easier," Billson said.

"We're sort of a committee that is there to help assist."

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