

Under the law, the majority of AAC members must be people with a disability. The benefit of this requirement is that people who have lived experience can share, firsthand, what it is like to experience particular barriers. Further, two or more municipalities may set up a joint committee, instead of having their own separate committees.

The role of an AAC is to advise and help municipal council carry out its responsibilities under the AODA.

Section 29 of the AODA describes three main activities for an AAC:

1. Advising municipal council about the requirements and implementation of accessibility standards and the preparation of accessibility reports and other matters for which the council may seek its advice.
2. Reviewing site plans and drawings described in section 41 of the Planning Act that the committee selects.
3. Performing all other functions that are specified in the regulations.

Reviewing site plans

Municipalities may exercise further control over the details of development. They do this through a process called site plan control. Through this process they can:

- review a developer's plans and either approve or ask for changes
- consider the accessibility of a development proposal.

The municipality may pass by-laws that set out the areas that are subject to site plan control. These areas must be described in the official plan. The review of site plans by municipal staff ensures that developers will provide:

- properly located buildings that fit in well with nearby businesses and the community
- safe and easy access for pedestrians
- a good design for landscaping, parking and drainage.

The site plan must also take into account the requirements of other agencies and departments that have jurisdiction.

What are the elements of a site plan?

A site plan is a drawing, or set of drawings, of proposed improvements to a property. For example, a site plan could include:

- buildings
- driveways
- entrances
- curbs or ramping
- parking areas
- sidewalks
- landscaping
- fences
- exterior lighting
- municipal services.

In some cases, a site plan will also set out elevations and slopes of walkways.

Who sets the design standards for site plans?

The municipality sets these standards, based on the requirements of the Ontario Building Code, the Planning Act and AODA standards. Standards are important for accessibility. They will help your municipality ensure new developments are accessible for all.

What is the role of the AAC in site plan review?

For the most part, barriers to access are created unintentionally during the design process. They are largely due to a lack of understanding of the issues. For that reason, accessibility issues should be addressed as early as possible in the site planning process.

AACs can get involved in reviewing some site plans. This can include:

- municipal offices
- community centres
- recreation centres
- other sports facilities.

Your AAC may not want or need to review every site plan submitted. Instead, you may want to set up processes to:

- Choose the types of developments you will review. For example, your AAC may decide to focus on reviewing new municipal developments. It may choose site plan reviews according to the proposed use. For example, you may focus first on community centres, arenas and civic centres.
- Consult with municipal staff to determine what accessibility criteria you will use with site plans. Municipal staff can tell you which accessibility criteria can be enforced, or if there are municipal standards already in place that you may use to review a site plan.
- Ensure that your municipality consults the AAC on certain types of site plans. For example, your municipality could include your AAC on the checklist of reviewers of these plans.

By law, municipalities must provide site plans and related drawings to AACs on request. AACs need to:

- find out if their municipality has its own design guidelines and ensure that each AAC member involved in reviewing site plans has a copy of the guidelines
- set up a process to receive notice when site plans are submitted
- request site plans in a timely fashion
- respond promptly to prevent delays in the approval process.

While the role of an AAC is to provide advice to municipalities, the advice may not always be endorsed.

Some municipalities audit their municipal buildings and facilities to assess their accessibility and identify barriers for removal. AAC members may be asked to participate in such an audit. See Appendix C for a site visit checklist based on universal design principles, which can help make buildings accessible to people with disabilities.