

# Pathways to Recreation

Learning about Ontario's Accessibility Standard  
for the Design of Public Spaces

## Guidebook



PARKS AND RECREATION ONTARIO

This resource provides an overview of Part IV.1 of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation, Ontario Regulation 191/11 and is not legal advice. Should you require assistance in interpreting the legislation or the regulation, please contact your legal adviser.

This resource has been created to assist in understanding the legislation and/or regulation and does not replace the official version of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation, Ontario Regulation 191/11 and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA). Please consult the regulation before developing or redeveloping public spaces to which the regulation applies. If there is any conflict between this resource, the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation and the AODA, the regulation and the AODA are the final authorities.

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# Introduction

## Overview of AODA Standards

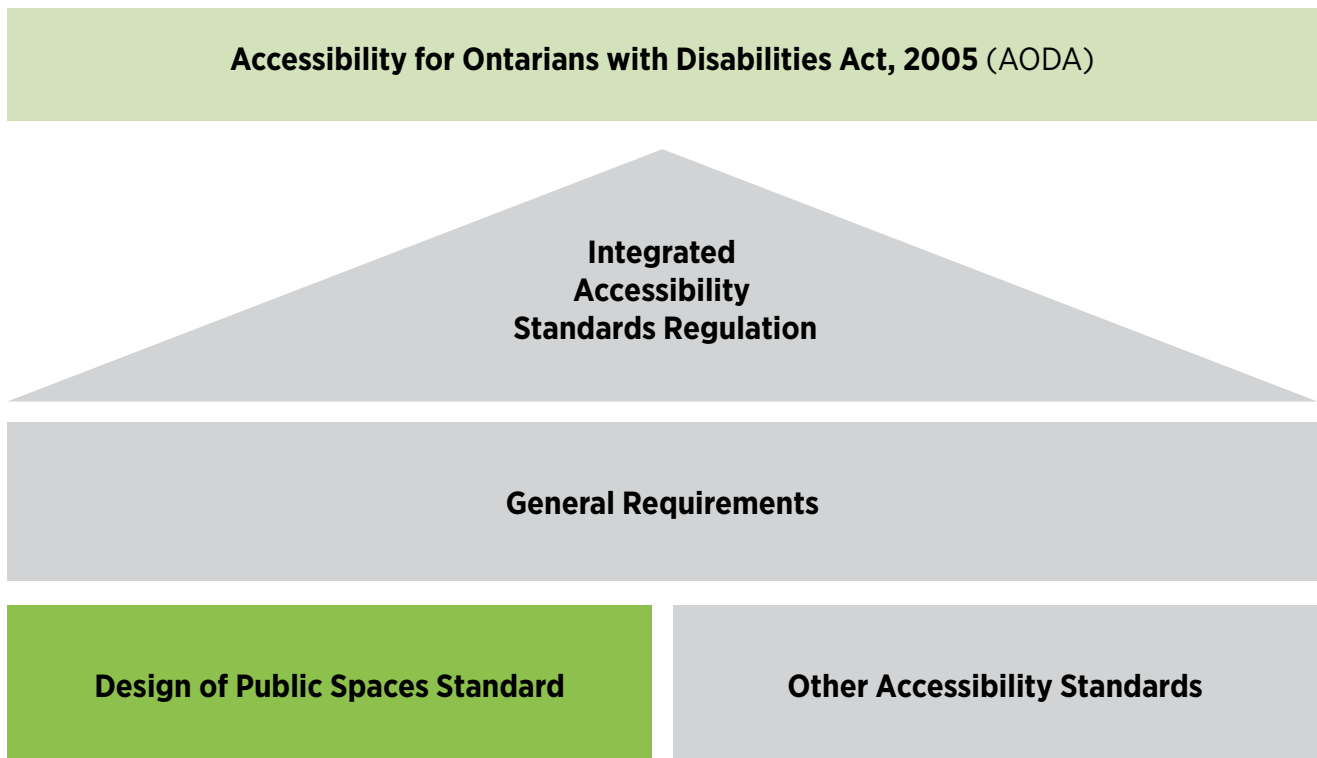
In 2005, the Government of Ontario passed the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, also known as the AODA. Its goal is to make Ontario accessible by 2025 by creating and enforcing accessibility standards that address key areas of daily living.

There are five accessibility **Standards** under the AODA:

1. Customer Service
2. Information and Communications
3. Employment
4. Transportation
5. Design of Public Spaces (Built Environment)

Figure 1 shows the relationship between the legislation and standards.

**Figure 1**



Ontario's public sector and private and not-for-profit organizations will be required to comply with the regulations governing these Standards over the coming years. This gives organizations time to make accessibility a part of their regular business planning.

The **Design of Public Spaces Standard** will help eliminate physical barriers to accessing some kinds of outdoor recreation experiences. The Standard is now law and requirements are being phased in over time.

This guidebook addresses the Design of Public Spaces Standard and is intended to provide owners, managers and/or operators of municipal and not-for-profit **parks, outdoor recreation facilities and amenities** with a better understanding of the requirements that pertain to making these facilities accessible, and to provide promising practices that can support successful implementation. This guidebook does not include all of the technical specifications contained in the Standard. It is intended to be used **in conjunction with** the Standard.

To this end, the guidebook is presented in five sections:

- 1 Benefits and Rationale for the Standard
- 2 Scope of the Design of Public Spaces Standard
- 3 Implementation of the Standard
- 4 Planning for Accessibility
- 5 Community Consultation

Each of the five sections is a stand-alone piece, in that the resources identified within it are contained within the section. Resources included are shown in ***bold, italicized typeface*** in the body of the text. All resources, along with links to relevant websites, are repeated in the List of Resources at the end of the document.

## Legislation and Government Resources

Resources and guidelines for the requirements of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation, including the Design of Public Spaces Standard, are available at [www.ontario.ca/AccessON](http://www.ontario.ca/AccessON).

# Section 1: Benefits and Rationale for the Standard

## Benefits of Recreation

*“Recreation, in its many forms, is acknowledged as one of the central values of human existence. We have a fundamental need to rejuvenate our minds and our bodies. Recreation is more than just fun and games; it has the power to change lives through the individual and societal benefits that it provides. Recreation is essential to sustaining a high quality of life.”*

*Ontario Recreation Framework (2012)*

- The health, social, economic and environmental benefits of recreation and parks are well documented through evidence-based research<sup>1</sup>.
- Participation in both structured and unstructured recreational, sport and cultural activities improves physical, psychological, mental and emotional health.
- Participating in recreational activities in outdoor public spaces further enhances the social and health benefits for participants and communities<sup>2</sup>.

Throughout this guidebook the term “recreation” is used in its broadest sense and refers to park and recreation services, facilities or departments.

## Why Accessibility?

- About 1.85 million people in Ontario have a disability; that’s 15.5% of Ontario’s population, or **1 in 7**.
- As the population ages, the number of Ontarians with a disability will increase to **1 in 5**, as will the need for accessibility.
- The number of seniors aged 65 and over in Ontario is projected to more than double from 1.7 million in 2008 to 4.1 million by 2036.
- By 2017, for the first time, seniors will account for a larger share of the Ontario population than children aged 14 and under.

Ontario’s municipal and not-for-profit recreation service providers have long been aware of the need to make recreation more accessible: both financial and physical barriers for participants need to be minimized to facilitate greater access and participation for all Ontarians.

Ontario is moving forward in developing its Seniors Care Strategy, which will help older Ontarians (age 65 and older) stay healthy, live at home longer and receive the right care, at the right time and in the right place. The AODA standards will have a significant impact on helping older adults stay active in their communities.

<sup>1</sup> For an online collection of research on the benefits of recreation and parks, see *The National Benefits Hub* at [www.benefitshub.ca](http://www.benefitshub.ca)

<sup>2</sup> Kuo, F. (2010). *Parks and Other Green Environments: Essential Components of a Healthy Human Habitat*. National Recreation and Park Association.

<sup>3</sup> Figures are from Statistics Canada and Ontario Ministry of Finance.

## Accessibility Benefits Everyone

Accessibility not only helps people with disabilities, it benefits:

- seniors, especially those with mobility difficulties;
- families travelling with young children using strollers or wagons; and
- the community as a whole because of increased citizen engagement.

## Section 2: Scope of the Design of Public Spaces Standard

### Areas Covered by the Standard

- Recreational trails
- Beach access routes
- Outdoor public use eating areas
- Outdoor play spaces
- Exterior paths of travel (e.g., sidewalks, walkways)
- Accessible parking
- Obtaining services (e.g., service counters)
- Maintenance

The Design of Public Spaces Standard does **not** address accessibility in buildings. Accessibility in buildings is addressed through the Ontario Building Code, which governs new construction and renovations in buildings.

The requirements set **minimum accessibility standards** in each of these areas. Organizations are encouraged to use innovative solutions to provide the highest level of accessibility based on local need, design and/or available budgets. Sections in this guidebook that address Promising Practices, Community Consultation and Planning for Accessibility include examples of different approaches to meeting accessibility requirements.

### Who Needs to Comply and When

Your organization will have to meet all its requirements starting on a certain date, based on its type and size.

The requirements apply when building new or significantly redeveloping existing public spaces on and after the dates set out below in Table 2.1. This allows organizations to include accessibility right at the beginning, in the earliest stages of planning and design.

**Table 2.1: Compliance Dates for Design of Public Spaces Standard by Type of Organization**

Organization Type	Compliance Date
Government of Ontario and Legislative Assembly	January 1, 2015
Large designated public sector <sup>4</sup> (50+ employees)	January 1, 2016
Small designated public sector (1-49 employees)	January 1, 2016
Large private and not-for-profit organizations (50+ employees)	January 1, 2017
Small private and not-for-profit organizations (1-49 employees), but only for requirements relating to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Recreational trails</li><li>• Beach access routes</li><li>• Accessible off-street parking</li><li>• Obtaining services</li></ul>	January 1, 2018

## Procurement Requirements

Under the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation, designated public sector organizations are required to integrate accessibility in their procurement practices [s.5]<sup>5</sup> by the following dates:

- Large designated public sector organizations (50+ employees): **January 1, 2013.**
- Small designated public sector organizations (1-49 employees): **January 1, 2014.**

This means that, although the specific requirements of the Design of Public Spaces Standard may not yet apply, designated public sector organizations need to consider and incorporate accessibility design, criteria and features, except where it is not practical to do so, when procuring new equipment (e.g., outdoor play space structures) or services (e.g., design of outdoor play space), up to three years prior to the Standard taking effect.

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<sup>4</sup> Designated public sector organizations include municipalities, hospitals, school boards, colleges, universities and public transportation providers.

<sup>5</sup> [s. 5] is the section of the regulation that outlines accessible procurement requirements.



## Go-forward Nature of the Requirements

Organizations are **not** required to retrofit public spaces to meet the requirements.

The Standard requires organizations to incorporate accessibility when:

- building **new** public spaces; or
- **redeveloping** existing public spaces.

### Terminology

**Redeveloping:** planned significant alterations to public spaces, but does not include maintenance activities, environmental mitigation or environmental restoration.

This means that organizations are not required to alter their public spaces if they have no plans to do so. Accessibility for elements related to buildings, such as building entrances, washrooms and barrier-free paths of travel are **not** addressed in this Standard. They are addressed through the Ontario Building Code.

## The Contribution of Recreation Departments to Enhancing Accessibility

Some of the facilities or outdoor spaces covered by the Standard will be the responsibility of parks and/or recreation departments (e.g., outdoor play spaces). Others (e.g., accessible parking, exterior paths of travel) will be the responsibility of other municipal departments. Often, these amenities may be part of the same, larger facility and are equally important for ensuring accessibility.

For example, when constructing or redeveloping a play space, the recreation department may need to work with the transportation department on accessible parking, and public works on access routes. Where collaborative approaches to planning and development are not already in place (see Section 4.0 of this guidebook) recreation departments can take the lead in organizing a coordinated, seamless approach to developing accessible outdoor recreation spaces. This will ensure the best possible recreation experience for all users, and can help establish an integrated approach to planning, consultation, design and development.

By adopting local organizational policies, procedures and design/development standards that formally recognize municipal support for accessibility (see Section 4.0), parks and recreation departments can position themselves as leaders in enabling change and encourage others in the community to coordinate efforts to improve accessibility for all citizens.

## Section 3: Implementation of the Standard

This section presents the information that will help organizations meet the requirements when building new or redeveloping recreation and park facilities that are included in the Standard. The information is presented under these main headings:

- Recreational Trails
- Beach Access Routes
- Outdoor Public Use Eating Areas
- Outdoor Play Spaces
- Exterior Paths of Travel
- Accessible Parking
- Obtaining Services (e.g., service counters)
- Maintenance of Accessible Elements

### Terminology

There are a number of different terms related to designing for improved accessibility. These terms are sometimes used interchangeably, but it is recommended that organizations are consistent in the terminology they use. Here are the most common terms used:

**Barrier Free Design:** facilities/spaces that are “barrier free” are generally free of obstacles, barriers or changes in level that would make access difficult for those using crutches, canes or wheeled forms of mobility (e.g., strollers, wheelchairs, scooters).

**Universal Design:** strives to maximize, to the greatest extent possible, the proportion of the potential users who will be able to access facilities and spaces, considering the broadest possible spectrum of potential users (e.g., different age groups, different abilities, genders, various cultures, etc.)

**Inclusive Design:** refers to design that is “inclusive of the full range of human diversity with respect to ability, language, culture, gender, age and other forms of human difference.” In essence, it is similar to universal design but attempts to replace the notion of accommodating differences via adaptations with seamless inclusion.

Adapted from:

Trails for All Ontarians Collaborative. (2006). ***Ontario's Best Trails: Guidelines and Best Practices for the Design, Construction and Maintenance of Sustainable Trails for All Ontarians.*** [www.ontariotrails.on.ca/assets/files/pdf/member-archives/reports/Ontario's%20Best%20Trails%20-%20Full%20Document.pdf](http://www.ontariotrails.on.ca/assets/files/pdf/member-archives/reports/Ontario's%20Best%20Trails%20-%20Full%20Document.pdf).

What is Inclusive Design. ***Inclusive Design Research Centre, OCAD University.*** <http://idrc.ocad.ca/index.php/about-the-idrc/49-resources/online-resources/articles-and-papers/443>.

# A. Recreational Trails

## Definition and Application

**Recreational trails:** public pedestrian trails that are intended for recreational and leisure purposes.

Standard applies to [s. 80.6]:<sup>6</sup>

- newly constructed and redeveloped recreational trails that an obligated organization intends to maintain; and
- all organizations listed in Table 2.1.

Standard does **not** apply to [s. 80.6]:

- trails solely intended for cross-country skiing, mountain biking or the use of motorized snow vehicles or off-road vehicles; and
- wilderness trails, backcountry trails and portage routes.

## Summary of Technical Requirements [s. 80.9(1)]

New or redeveloped recreational trails must:

- meet minimum clear width (1 m) and height (2.1 m) specifications;
- have a firm and stable surface;
- meet restrictions on the size of surface openings (must not allow passage of an object that has a diameter of more than 20 mm), and orient elongated openings perpendicular to the direction of travel;
- meet specifications on edge protection (50 mm) when located beside water or a drop-off, except where a protective barrier already exists;
- provide minimum clear width at its opening (0.85 m to 1 m), regardless of entrance design (e.g., gate, bollard, etc.); and
- meet trail head signage requirements as outlined in the Standard.



### Top Tip:

When planning a new trail or redeveloping an existing trail, remember that often the full length of the trail may not have to meet the technical requirements of the Standard. Consulting with local users will help you decide the appropriate distance for your accessible trail.

Newly constructed or redeveloped **boardwalks and ramps** on recreation trails are subject to additional minimum requirements as set out in Section 80.12 and Section 80.13 of the regulation, respectively.

Exceptions to requirements of the Standard and limitations to these for recreational trails are described in Section 80.14 and Section 80.15.

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<sup>6</sup> Relevant section numbers to the standard are included in the guide as a reference for the reader should they wish to locate the information within the regulation

## Signage on Recreational Trails

Providing clear signage can help users decide how best to enjoy the trail experience according to their needs and abilities. The trail head must have signage containing information about the physical characteristics of the trail [s. 80.9(1)8], including:

- length of trail;
- type of surface of which the trail is constructed;
- average and minimum trail width;
- average and maximum running slope and cross slope; and
- location of amenities, where provided.

There are also requirements for tonal contrast and font type to be used for the signage [s. 80.9(2)].

When other media are used to provide information about the recreational trail (beyond advertising, notice or promotion), such as a park website or brochure, it must contain the same information as the trail head signage [s. 80.9(3)].

## Summary of Consultation Requirements

Consultation requirements apply to all obligated organizations (listed in Table 2.1). Before developing a new recreational trail or redeveloping an existing recreational trail for pedestrian use, organizations must consult on [s. 80.8]:

1. slope of the trails;
2. need for, and location of, ramps on the trail; and
3. need for, location and design of:
  - i. rest areas;
  - ii. passing areas;
  - iii. viewing areas;
  - iv. amenities on the trail; and
  - v. any other relevant accessibility feature.

Organizations must consult with the public and people with disabilities. Municipalities have additional consultation requirements with their accessibility advisory committee (where established).

The intent of consultation on the specific elements listed above is to give people with disabilities the opportunity to provide input as part of the planning and development of accessible trails. Consultation can also prevent organizations from assuming what accessibility features the people accessing the trail will need. See Section 5.0 of this guidebook for information about community consultation.

### Terminology

**Rest area:** a dedicated, level area on a recreational trail or exterior path of travel that allows people to stop or sit.

**Amenities:** items that provide conveniences or services for use by the public, for example, drinking fountains, benches, interpretive signs and garbage receptacles.

## Promising Practices

### York Regional Forest: Hollidge Tract

The York Regional Forest Hollidge Tract, located in the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville, has an accessible trail that provides a unique nature experience to all users including those with disabilities. The one kilometre loop was a pilot project for the Region. The trail passes through a variety of areas including a red pine forest, a lowland mixed wood forest, a young hardwood forest and a wetland area.<sup>7</sup>

It is a multi-use trail, accommodating all users, including equestrians, and was redeveloped as follows:<sup>8</sup>

- The trail was widened, cleared of obstructions and graded to ensure ease-of-movement for all visitors.
- The entire surface was constructed from packaged granular material to provide a durable surface suitable for mobility aids.
- There is accessible area parking and clear trail head signage.

Its success prompted the Regional Council to establish an annual budget to work towards the development of additional accessible trails in the York Regional Forest. Future redevelopment will occur within the existing trail network in locations where the local accessible trail standard can be accommodated with minimal impact on the existing environment.

The York Regional Forest comprises rich natural habitats that are home to a diversity of wildlife. They provide for a variety of recreational uses, including bird watching, dog walking, horseback riding and mountain biking. Accessibility trail enhancements will provide people with disabilities the opportunity to experience the York Regional Forest trail system. In addition, this opportunity will help provide information, and a demonstration location, for municipalities advancing accessible trails and facilities in local parks and on conservation lands.<sup>6</sup>



*Hollidge Tract accessible trail has edge protection and packed granular surface (photos courtesy York Region)*

<sup>7</sup> [www.york.ca/wps/portal/yorkhome/recreation/yr/yorkregionalforest/](http://www.york.ca/wps/portal/yorkhome/recreation/yr/yorkregionalforest/)

<sup>8</sup> <http://lin.ca/success-story-details/19468>

## Project Considerations (for Recreational Trails)

In York Region, some of the considerations and lessons learned will be helpful to keep in mind when planning a new trail or the redevelopment of a trail.

### Consultation

- Consider involving potential users **throughout** the process, in addition to the required consultations. While we cannot literally ‘walk a mile’ in someone else’s shoes, it can be helpful to experience a facility or space from the perspectives of a potential user. Consider visiting a site that is similar to what is proposed in your community, accompanied by a person with a disability. Seek their input on design features.
- Consult and engage with different user groups to address conflicting needs. Remember that accessibility also enhances trail experiences for a variety of users, not just people with disabilities (e.g., 2.43 m vs. 1.5 m wide trail to accommodate horse and rider and person in a wheelchair side-by-side).
- Facilitate first time users’ introduction to trails and educate the public about trail etiquette.



### Top Tips:

- Trails should be designed to accommodate a variety of users safely. Think multi-modal.
- Depending on trail distance and community need, consider an accessible “loop” on a longer trail.
- Prioritize and plan. Leave lots of time to consider community needs for both recreation and active transportation.
- Don’t over-develop: let people experience nature on trails.

### Planning and Design

- Connect with others who have already done the work and have an accessible trail design expert on your team.
- Aim for inclusive design and use, and be sure to address any possible conflicts between different user groups (e.g., motorized use vs. hiking) during the consultation phase.
- Make sure your project plan includes ample time for planning. Grading and drainage were an issue in York Region that needed extra time during the planning and design phase.
- Keep the public informed throughout the process of design to avoid conflict. Some people in York Region had the misconception that trails needed to be paved to be accessible. However, natural surfaces can be firm and stable and therefore suitable for people with disabilities and those using mobility aids. Trails in natural areas can incorporate natural surfaces to improve environmental sustainability and to enhance the overall experience on the trail.
- Choose the site wisely: not all natural areas – due to characteristics of landscape or soil conditions (e.g., sandy soil) – lend themselves to the provision of accessible trails without degrading the natural environment. York Region used a two-stage selection process:
  1. General assessment to identify priority areas for trail development or redevelopment, from which a short list of eligible sites emerged, based on opportunities and constraints at each location (e.g., feasibility of providing continuous trail with required slopes without having to significantly ‘re-engineer’ the natural environment).
  2. Based on the consultation, eligible sites were assigned priority in the Region’s overall planning cycle and moved to the design/development phase.

York Region is in the process of developing detailed local design standards for its trails and these will be published when finalized. They will include accessible parking and rest areas, which will use natural furnishings but will not include eating areas, as these areas are for passive recreation only.

## Resources

There are a number of current resources that provide detailed information on the design of accessible trails and graphics for signage. These resources can be used to develop local design guidelines or standards that will apply to all new development/redevelopment of trails, and to audit existing installations for accessibility.

### Canadian Resources include:

RGD Ontario. (2010). **Access Ability: A Practical Handbook on Accessible Graphic Design.** The Association of Registered Graphic Designers of Ontario.  
[www.rgd.ca/database/files/library/RGD\\_AccessAbility\\_Handbook.pdf](http://www.rgd.ca/database/files/library/RGD_AccessAbility_Handbook.pdf).

SPH Planning and Consulting Ltd (2011/2012). **Trails and Beach Access Routes.** Adapted from the original Accessibility Design Guidelines prepared for the City of Markham (June 2011) and updated for the City of Ottawa (2012).

Trails for All Ontarians Collaborative. (2006). **Ontario's Best Trails.**  
[www.ontariotrails.on.ca/assets/files/pdf/member-archives/reports/Ontario's%20Best%20Trails%20-%20%20Full%20Document.pdf](http://www.ontariotrails.on.ca/assets/files/pdf/member-archives/reports/Ontario's%20Best%20Trails%20-%20%20Full%20Document.pdf).

## B. Beach Access Routes

### Definition and Application

**Beach access routes:** routes that provide access to recreational areas on public beaches. They can be either permanent or temporary.

Standard applies to:

- newly constructed and redeveloped beach access routes that an obligated organization intends to maintain, including permanent and temporary routes and temporary routes that are established through the use of manufactured goods, which can be removed for the winter months. [s. 80.7]; and
- all organizations listed in Table 2.1.



## Summary of Technical Requirements [s. 80.10]

New or redeveloped beach access routes must:

- meet minimum clear width (1 m) and height (2.1 m) specifications;
- meet a maximum **running slope** ratio (1:10);
- meet restrictions on the size of surface openings, and orient elongated openings perpendicular to the direction of travel;
- provide minimum clear width at its opening (1 m), regardless of entrance design (e.g., gate, bollard, etc.);
- have a firm and stable surface;
- where the surface is not constructed (i.e., natural), adhere to a minimum **cross slope** required for drainage; and
- where the surface area is constructed (i.e., not natural), adhere to specifications on maximum **cross slope**, **bevel** ratios at changes in levels, maximum **running slope** at changes in levels, ramp requirements at changes in levels.

Newly constructed or redeveloped **boardwalks and ramps** on beach access routes are subject to additional minimum requirements as set out in Section 80.12 and Section 80.13, respectively.

Exceptions to requirements of the Standard and limitations to these for beach access routes are described in Section 80.14 and Section 80.15.

## Summary of Consultation Requirements

There are no consultation requirements for beach access routes.



### Top Tip:

Beach access routes can be on the beach or near/beside the beach. The route should increase access to the place intended for recreational activity. If the area intended for recreational activity is set back from the water, the beach access route may not cross the sand. If the area where recreational activity is intended is closer to the water, then the beach access route may cross the sand surface.



### Terminology

**Running slope:** the slope of a surface that is parallel to the direction of travel.

**Cross slope:** the slope of a surface that is perpendicular to the direction of travel.

**Bevel:** a small slope that helps an individual negotiate an elevation change.



## Promising Practices

### Grand Bend Beach Enhancement

Grand Bend Beach, in the Municipality of Lambton Shores, is one of Ontario's busiest summer tourist attractions. In 2008, the Municipality began a \$3.5 million renovation to the beach area to enhance accessibility, safety, and environmental sustainability. After a public consultation process, the project focused on four key design principles:

- increased accessibility;
- use of sustainable products;
- increased opportunities for play; and
- lighting.

Because of the consultation process, the municipality had strong community support, and raised \$1.2 million in donations towards the project.

Accessible features include:

- enhanced parking lots include multiple access points along the accessible boardwalk that runs along the length of the main beach;
- accessible eating areas at concessions include features such as picnic tables that wheelchairs can pull up to, concrete surrounding the concession area for easy access;
- accessible boardwalk made from recycled wood, leading to viewing platforms; and
- accessible playground and splash pad.

The municipality decided to install an accessible splash pad adjacent to the beach to both improve safety and accessibility. The pad is fully accessible for children of all abilities. On days when the waves are too high or the water is otherwise unsafe, young children can still play in the water.



*The boardwalk at Grand Bend Beach includes seating suitable for people using mobility aids and edge protection (Plexiglas within the railing design)*



*Concrete and wooden walkways along the entire length of the main beach of Grand Bend allow for easy access for everyone. The main beach is Blue Flag designated, which has accessibility as one of its requirements (photo courtesy Municipality of Lambton Shores)*

*The playground at Grand Bend Beach has an engineered wood chip surface and ramps that allow easy access to certain play areas (photo courtesy Municipality of Lambton Shores)*



*The observation deck of the Grand Bend Beach House can be accessed by either stairs or elevator. Plexiglas panels surround the deck to allow the scenic views to be enjoyed by everyone (photo courtesy Municipality of Lambton Shores)*

## **Mobi-Mat RecPaths™, Wasaga Beach**

Mobi-Mat RecPaths™ are portable rolled-out mats that “improve mobility for wheelchair users, disabled people, strollers and pedestrians by providing a durable, stable walkway across the sand to access the water.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> [www.simcoe.com/news-story/3893028-wasaga-beach-access-available-to-all/](http://www.simcoe.com/news-story/3893028-wasaga-beach-access-available-to-all/)



*Wasaga Beach Mobi-Mat RecPaths™ installation<sup>10</sup>*

Ten of these mats, each 50' long, have been installed at beaches in Wasaga through a partnership between Town Council and Wasaga Beach Provincial Park. Funding for the mats comprised a \$36,222 grant from the federal government's Enabling Accessibility Fund and a \$12,000 donation from a local corporation. Wasaga Beach Provincial Park will handle annual installation, maintenance and end of season storage of the mats and a local Lions Club will help with maintenance.

*Wasaga Beach<sup>11</sup>; ramp access to Rockaway Beach, New York, New York<sup>12</sup>*



## Project Considerations (for Beach Access Routes)

The example from Wasaga Beach offers one of many solutions to improving access to beach areas, which can include temporary as well as permanent installations. By including this example, Parks and Recreation Ontario is not endorsing the product used in this case. PRO recommends that, as is standard practice, municipalities or other organizations conduct a thorough community needs assessment, research other options and conduct an RFP process. Organizations can also consider permanent solutions to beach access, which can provide users greater independence.

<sup>10</sup> <http://beachbooster.blogspot.ca/2013/08/wasaga-beach-provincial-parks-installs.html>

<sup>11</sup> [www.mycollingwood.ca/Accessible\\_Beach\\_in\\_Wasaga.asp](http://www.mycollingwood.ca/Accessible_Beach_in_Wasaga.asp)

<sup>12</sup> Picture source: <http://themobilityproject.net/category/recreation/>

As seen in the Grand Bend Beach enhancement, wooden boardwalks can also be a good solution for beach access.

General design considerations can include:

- the types of activities, aside from access to water, in which people will be participating at the beach and which accessibility features will allow those using mobility aids to participate;
- the impact of storms and other severe weather on installations and if winter storage will be required; and
- research the best types of surfaces for the climate, surface and surrounding area. It may be helpful to reference studies such as ***Beach Access Study Results: Surfaces***.

## Resources

### Canadian Resource:

SPH Planning and Consulting Ltd. (2011/2012). ***Trails and Beach Access Routes***. Adapted from the original Accessibility Design Guidelines prepared for the City of Markham (June 2011) and updated for the City of Ottawa (2012).

### Other Resource:

Hamilton, E.J., Burgess, F.M., Hepfer, P.C. (2002). ***Beach Access Study Results: Surfaces***. National Centre on Accessibility Indiana University Study #00-4088.

[https://scholarworks.iu.edu/dspace/bitstream/handle/2022/3101/Beach\\_Study\\_Final\\_Report.pdf;jsessionid=47F27659C6CB36A005E2A630E3D6B5E0?sequence=2](https://scholarworks.iu.edu/dspace/bitstream/handle/2022/3101/Beach_Study_Final_Report.pdf;jsessionid=47F27659C6CB36A005E2A630E3D6B5E0?sequence=2).

## C. Outdoor Public Use Eating Areas

### Definition and Application

**Outdoor public use eating areas:** consist of tables that are found in public areas, such as in public parks, on hospital grounds and on university campuses and are specifically intended for use by the public as a place to consume food. [s. 80.16 (2)].

Standard applies to:

- newly constructed and redeveloped outdoor public use eating areas that an obligated organization intends to maintain. [s. 80.16 (1)]; and
- all organizations listed in Table 2.1 (other than small private or not-for-profit organizations with 1–49 employees).

## Summary of Technical Requirements [s. 80.17]

When constructing new or redeveloping existing outdoor public use eating areas, organizations must:

- provide accessible tables that total 20% of new stock, with at least one table of new stock being accessible. These tables must be accessible to people using mobility aids by having knee and toe clearance underneath the table(s);
- provide a level, firm and stable ground surface leading up to, and under, the table(s); and
- provide clear ground space around the table(s) to permit people using mobility aids to approach the table(s) directly.

## Summary of Consultation Requirements

There are no consultation requirements for outdoor public use eating areas. However, if they are incorporated in other public spaces (e.g., play spaces, recreational trails), as a good practice they could be included in the consultation process for the project as a whole.

## Promising Practices



*Examples of promising practices for public use eating areas*

## Project Considerations (for outdoor public use eating areas)

Although the Standard applies to individual components of public spaces, together they will comprise a recreation setting. It is important, therefore, to carry accessible design practices throughout the entire site, so that people using mobility devices can also easily access eating (and rest) areas.



## D. Outdoor Play Spaces

### Definition and Application

**Outdoor play space:** an area that includes play equipment, such as swings, or features such as logs, rocks, sand or water, where the equipment or features are designed and placed to provide play opportunities and experiences for children and caregivers. [s. 80.18 (2)].

The Standard provides a broad definition of play space in order to allow communities to decide what will meet their needs. There are three important factors that will help communities define and build accessible, outdoor play spaces:

- community need, based on consultation
- budget
- location/site characteristics (size, opportunities and restrictions)

The consultation process will guide decision-makers and will help define the scope of the project, which will vary by community according to the factors noted above. Some communities may define an entire new park as a play space, determining that all elements of the site will be planned, designed and built to be accessible. Others will have more modest installations, which could focus on one element/component within the setting. Budgetary constraints are a fact of life, and accessible play spaces may be more expensive to provide than traditionally designed playgrounds. Providing the public with clear information about budgets available for the work will help set expectations at the appropriate level.

Once the scope of the project is established, and the components of the play space determined, elements such as exterior paths of travel, outdoor public use eating areas, and accessible parking must meet the requirements specified by the Standard. The selection of surface materials, the individual play components, the proportion of these that are accessible, and the resulting design and configuration of the space is less restrictive – providing individual communities with latitude to determine their own approach to providing accessible play spaces. For these components of the overall project, detailed guidance is provided in the Canadian Standards Association's, ***Children's Playspaces and Equipment Standard (CAN/CSA Z164-07) Annex H: Children's playspaces and equipment that are accessible to persons with disabilities*** (2007). If a conflict should arise between the Annex H guidelines and the Design of Public Spaces Standard, the latter prevails.

Standard applies to:

- newly constructed and redeveloped outdoor play spaces that an obligated organization intends to maintain and that fall within the description set above. [s. 80.18 (1)]; and
- all organizations listed in Table 2.1 (other than small private and not-for-profit organizations with 1–49 employees). [s.80.18 (1)].

## Summary of Technical Requirements [s. 80.20]

New or significantly redeveloped, existing outdoor play spaces must:

- incorporate accessibility features such as, but not limited to, sensory and active play components for children and caregivers with various disabilities;
- provide a ground surface that is firm and stable to accommodate users with mobility devices, yet resilient enough to absorb impact for injury prevention in the area around the play equipment; and
- provide sufficient clearance in and around the play space to allow children with various disabilities and their caregivers room to move around the space.

## Summary of Consultation Requirements [s. 80.19]

Consultation requirements apply to:

- designated public sector organizations; and
- large private and not-for-profit organizations with 50 or more employees.

These organizations must consult on the needs of children and caregivers with various disabilities before building new, or redeveloping existing, play spaces. Design features noted above are some of the types of accessibility features that must be considered in the consultation.

Organizations must consult with the public and people with disabilities. Municipalities have additional consultation requirements with their accessibility advisory committee (where established).

Consultations provide organizations with valuable insight and help designers and decision makers understand potential accessibility barriers in order to develop design solutions that better meet the needs of the community. For consultations to add value to the planning and design process, they should occur as early as possible. See Section 5.0 of this guidebook for information about community consultation for accessibility.

## Promising Practices

### Audley Recreation Centre, Town of Ajax

The Audley Recreation Centre (ARC) and outdoor park features an inclusive playground that provides opportunities for children of all ages and abilities to play and interact in a safe and healthy environment. The playground is a sensory-rich environment providing elements that are tactile, visual and auditory to support the needs of the greater community who have varying abilities. The project was completed in June 2013.

This inclusive playground design is one of the first of its kind in Durham Region and includes many accessibility-related features such as:

- playground entrance is at grade with accessible paths of travel;
- engineered wood fiber surfacing that meets firm, stable and impact-attenuating or impact-absorbing properties for injury prevention;
- accessible entrance/outlet points from the accessible route along the perimeter boundary of the playground; and
- accessible routes connecting the playground to adjacent sidewalks and community centre facility.

In addition, the outdoor play space has been enhanced with features that will stimulate creative play for children of all abilities including:

- a sensory play area;
- a planted sensory garden and maze;
- play apparatus with components that make music and sound;
- a stegosaurus exploration dig ('bones' are made to scale in glass fiber-reinforced concrete matrix replicating actual museum specimens);
- large Mayan climbing rock based on an authentic archaeological find; and
- fabricated boulders embedded with replicas of actual fossils.



*Audley Park: accessible scorpion splash pad water feature (photo courtesy Town of Ajax)*



*Audley Park: accessible ramp and sensory play equipment (photo courtesy Town of Ajax)*

## **Crosby Park, Town of Richmond Hill (2009 PRO Award-winner)**

Crosby Park is a universally accessible park and playground. It was re-designed and developed for inclusive recreation so that “everyone, from the able-bodied and physically challenged to those with sensory and cognitive impairments, and even seniors, can enjoy the simple pleasures of outdoor recreation.



“The park’s design interprets diverse landscape types including forests, meadows, dells, hollows, ponds, rivers and valleys to create a stimulating and fully accessible outdoor recreation environment.”<sup>13</sup>

The Town adopts place-making themes for its parks, and an inclusive theme was chosen for this site. Similar to the Town of Ajax example, Crosby Park includes a water play area, a playground and other unique elements that enhance the space for all users, including:

- wayfinding signage;
- extra-wide, gently sloping trails;
- a sensory garden with a variety of annuals, herbs, perennials and grasses;
- many seating and lookout areas for bird watching;
- colourful birdhouses and various artwork throughout the site;
- board game tables that are accessible for people using mobility aids; and
- playground with accessible features described below.

“Crosby Park...looks like any ordinary park with its customary playground, swings and slides. But upon closer view it’s really a park like no other. It’s a place where a kid can just be a kid, regardless of ability. It’s a place to exercise your senses and discover your musical talent...What separates Crosby Park from the rest is the attention paid to detail...It accommodates the needs of individuals with mobility/agility impairments, sensory impairments, co-ordination impairments, strength/endurance impairments and cognitive impairments, permanent or temporary.” – Barry Munro, Richmond Hill Mobility Accessibility Foundation

The playground structure comprises one of the largest in Ontario, which can be entirely accessed without steps, and includes an elevated sandbox and a double-width slide that can accommodate a child and caregiver. The playground area incorporates gently sloped ramps with railings, a rubberized play surface, and rubberized and non-rubberized swing courts.



*Crosby Park: accessible panels at ground level; talk tubes in background are colour coded and correspond to the same colour tube on the play structure to encourage interaction between children (photo courtesy Town of Richmond Hill)*

<sup>13</sup> [www.richmondhill.ca/subpage.asp?pageid=crosby\\_accessibility\\_park](http://www.richmondhill.ca/subpage.asp?pageid=crosby_accessibility_park)



*Crosby Park: triple-width slide allows user and caregiver to go down at the same time; note there is no step to the slide; spiral slide has a transfer station at the slide to accommodate users (photo courtesy Town of Richmond Hill)*



*Crosby Park: sound drums and chairs are musical instruments for sensory experience; concrete wheelchair tracks and water play area (photo courtesy Town of Richmond Hill)*



*Crosby Park: wadedock at waterplay area is ramped to give all users a similar experience (photo courtesy Town of Richmond Hill)*



*Crosby Park: ramp at play structure (photo courtesy Town of Richmond Hill)*

## Milton Community Park, Town of Milton

In response to needs identified through public consultation for the Community Services Master Plan (2008), Milton Community Park offers residents of the Town a barrier-free creative playground. The playground is designed to incorporate extensive sensory play features that are both accessible and inclusive. It not only provides physical access, but also addresses the needs of children with cognitive and sensory disabilities.

Milton Community Park includes the following accessible features:

- centrally located activity space;
- children's play area, designed in compliance with CAN/CSA Z614-07, ANNEX-H;
- hard-surface paths and trails through open and wooded areas;
- look-out beside the 16 Mile Creek valley, with sloped pathways;
- clear signage, including wayfinding and directional;
- accessible parking at the entrances, complete with drop off areas;
- accessible picnic tables and seating areas; and
- field house with accessible washrooms and change rooms.

### **Accessibility Features of the Playground**

The junior playground area is surfaced with poured-in-place rubber at grade with the surrounding landscape. Tactile climbers, slides, a double bedway feature slide and play panels offer a variety of sensory and cooperative play experiences. An accessible swing seat and a tot seat are included in the swing set.

The senior play area is surfaced in engineered wood fiber with ramps leading from the perimeter trail into the playground. A ramp wide enough to permit two-way wheelchair traffic leads to a hexagonal platform with a variety of sensory and play opportunities. A large inclusive play feature is connected to this platform, where users of all ages and abilities are encouraged to cooperate to make a swaying rocker work. A doublewide feature slide allows for both caregiver and child to slide together. A tactile roller slide is incorporated, and accessible swings are also available alongside belt swing seats.

Sensory features include textured climbing elements, balancing challenges, spinning activities and tactile experiences. Interactive play opportunities were specifically designed for easy access from a wheelchair or a walker.



*Milton Community Park: children side-by-side on accessible swing and belt swing (photo courtesy Town of Milton)*



*Milton Community Park: poured-in-place rubber surfacing and equipment in junior playground (photo courtesy Town of Milton)*



*Milton Community Park: junior, senior and sensory areas of playground (photo courtesy Town of Milton)*

## Project Considerations (for Play Spaces)

There are many factors to consider when designing a new play space or significantly redeveloping an existing one to create accessible places. Some will increase accessibility, but many more will enhance the area/play space for all users, regardless of ability. Below is a summary of some of the most important aspects to keep in mind that can help create a welcoming space that promotes equitable use.

### Location:

1. Choose a geographically accessible location within the community. First and foremost, it should be a space that meets community needs (i.e., accessible by transit, ample parking, area with many families).
2. Design with existing site characteristics to help minimize cost of redevelopment.
3. Ensure sufficient parking to accommodate users, whether on-site or on-street, or situate the park near accessible transit.

### Areas Surrounding the Play Space:

1. Ensure that the accessible play structures are integrated into the plan for the entire site.
2. Provide an orientation path and wayfinding with easily perceptible information.
3. Ensure fencing/containment does not increase barriers. Instead it should provide a sense of comfort for both children and caregivers. For example, there can be concerns for those supervising special needs users with “flight” tendencies. Fencing also supports those supervising multiple children, eases concerns over nearby road traffic, etc.
4. Provide sight lines for supervision.
5. Aim to minimize distance from park entry or parking lot to play space.

### **Accessible Elements of the Play Space:**


1. Structures should be designed to challenge users of **all abilities** in a variety of ways, and allow for self-directed play.
2. Structures should be intuitive and simple to understand/use.
3. Include ramps and/or transfer systems to some of the elevated play components.
4. Use materials that are suitable for everyone (e.g., although not prohibited by the Standard, polyethylene slides are not appropriate for people with cochlear implants).
5. Use colours and finishes judiciously to balance the need for delineation, safety, wayfinding, and sensory stimulation with the need to consider people with sensory sensitivities/susceptibility to over-stimulation.

### **Facilitating Mobility:**

1. Use surfacing that accommodates anyone using a mobility device (e.g., a cane, walker, wheelchair, scooter) and minimizes injuries from falls.
2. Slope of any path/walkway must meet the Standard's requirement for exterior paths of travel.
3. Pathways to, and throughout the play space, should provide circulation/access to all spaces/equipment.
4. Pathways are wide enough for two people using wheelchairs to travel side-by-side (minimum clear width in the Standard is 1 m for trails and 1.5 m for exterior paths of travel).  
To accommodate two wheelchairs, it is recommended to have a minimum clearance of 1.5 m. For example, guidelines of the United Nations recommend 1.8 m as minimum clearance for two wheelchairs.

### **Considerations for Enhancing the Play Space for All Users:**

1. Offer varied play experiences by providing a variety of play components, opportunities and experiences (e.g., cognitive, problem solving, physical play, graduated challenge, balance and co-ordination, body control, sliding, spinning, swinging, bouncing, tactile, sensory, etc.).
2. Ensure there are multiple ways to use and access equipment or features.
3. Provide play areas for children aged 18 months to 5 years and for children aged 6 to 12 years with age-appropriate challenge/stimulation. Create activity pods, rooms, zones, etc.
4. Integrate play areas that invite engagement between children of diverse abilities.
5. Combine natural and man-made features. Incorporate natural landscaping elements into the play space (e.g., sand, vegetation, water, rocks, elevation changes, etc.).



The enhancements listed here are examples of features that will improve the quality of the space for all users. Remember to consult the Standard to determine which of these kinds of features will need to comply with the Standard.



6. Provide gathering spaces (e.g., under a play structure, inside a piece of equipment, or with landscaping) and rest areas at transfer points and throughout the site.
7. Use at-grade as well as elevated/platform play equipment, provided in appropriate proportions, to accommodate participants who may not be able to access upper levels.
8. Where appropriate, provide ramps with a destination, and different ramps for upward/downward movement.
9. Install benches with backs and armrests that are strategically placed throughout and surrounding the space, preferably in the shade.
10. Ensure there are appropriate height and knee clearances at tables/fountains, and reach ranges (e.g., gate latches, dispensers, etc.).
11. Provide trash receptacles along exterior paths of travel.
12. Where possible, ensure there are accessible washrooms near the play space.
13. Install lighting for visibility and safety.
14. Provide accessible outdoor eating areas.

### **A Word About Surfaces:**

Surfacing is one of the most significant considerations, given its importance to facilitating easy access to play equipment and experiences, travel to/from and throughout the play area, and safety. It can also be the most costly component of the installation, making accessible play spaces more expensive than traditional playgrounds (see Section 4.0 of this guidebook for a discussion of costs).

Organizations must make sure that outdoor play spaces have ground surfaces that are firm and stable for example, to allow wheelchairs to roll easily while balancing the need for the safety of all children and the prevention of injuries.

Impact-attenuating or shock-absorbing surfaces are intended to be located **within** the play space proper and surrounding the play equipment to absorb the impact of falls. Acceptable options for use inside the play space include but are not limited to:

- a. synthetic poured-in-place (unitary);
- b. synthetic tiles;
- c. engineered wood fibres; and
- d. certain types of rubber mulch (loose-fill).



#### **Top Tip:**

It is recommended obtaining written confirmation from the supplier of the acceptability of surfacing products for accessible installations regarding 1) protection from falls; and 2) stability and firmness.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Guidance on these elements is available in **CAN/CSA Z614-07: Annex H**



*Poured in place rubber surfacing  
(photo courtesy Scott Belair)*



*Audley Park: engineered wood fibre  
surface (photo courtesy Town of Ajax)*

In addition to providing accessible surfaces within the play space, it is important to:

1. Provide exterior paths of travel from the park entry to the play space entry that are firm, stable, slip-resistant and meet the height and width requirements of Section 80.23 (minimum 1.5 m in width and 2.1 m in height).
2. Minimize the change in elevation from the exterior path of travel to the firm, stable and impact-absorbing surface so that there is a smooth transition for children with disabilities between the two surfaces (i.e., no speed bump or barrier to access). This can often be achieved with appropriate depressed curbs (also known as curb cuts) and concrete slope routes into surfaces that may deteriorate and/or become displaced. This can be a significant concern with loose fill surfaces such as engineered wood fibres that may become displaced and/or deteriorate and is less of a concern with synthetic surfacing options that remain in place.



#### **Top Tip:**

Both unitary and loose-fill surfaces have benefits that enhance safety for all users, as they have been proven to reduce injuries from falls. Unitary surfaces may be more costly than loose-fill products, but will, in some cases also increase accessibility for people using mobility aids.

## **Play Space Inspection and Maintenance**

While the Standard does not address ongoing inspection and maintenance of play spaces, it is an important municipal concern relating to the safety of all users. As with 'traditional' playground installations, many equipment manufacturers and suppliers will be able to provide owners/operators with inspection and maintenance specifications that are relevant to individual installations of accessible equipment or features.

As an ongoing activity, it may be useful to establish a consistent approach to this work. If no policies or procedures addressing inspection and maintenance are in place in your community and training is required, please visit the **Canadian Playground Safety Institute** to locate certified playground inspectors or to access online and in-class training opportunities involving accessible play spaces. Ontario Parks Association also offers a workshop titled **Playspace Accessibility Training: A guide to barrier-free play spaces and accessibility for all**.

## Resources

There are a number of current resources that provide detailed information on the design of accessible play spaces. These resources can be used to develop local design guidelines or standards that will apply to all new development/redevelopment of play spaces, and to audit existing installations for accessibility.

### Canadian Resources:

Canadian Standards Association. (2007). **Children's Playspaces and Equipment Standard (CAN/CSA Z614-07). Annex H: Children's playspaces and equipment that are accessible to persons with disabilities.**

CSA Z614-07 Annex H has established independent, minimum accessibility requirements for newly constructed playspaces as well as renovations and retrofits. It provides specifications for elements within a play area to create a general level of usability for children with disabilities. Emphasis is placed on ensuring that children with disabilities are generally able to access the diversity of components provided provided in a play area. [www.allabilitieswelcome.ca/Playspaces/files/Annex\\_H\\_Guidebook.pdf](http://www.allabilitieswelcome.ca/Playspaces/files/Annex_H_Guidebook.pdf).

IPA Canada. (2009). **Play and Natural Learning Spaces Design, Construction and Maintenance Policy Template.** [www.allabilitieswelcome.ca/Playspaces/files/PlayspacePolicyTemplate.pdf](http://www.allabilitieswelcome.ca/Playspaces/files/PlayspacePolicyTemplate.pdf).

SPH Planning and Consulting Ltd (2011). **Inclusive Playspace Design Guide.** Adapted from original Accessibility Design Guidelines prepared for the City of Markham (June 2011).

Stanfield, S. **Let's Play: Creating Accessible Play Spaces.** Rick Hansen Institute. [www.rickhansen.com/Portals/0/WhatWeDo/SchoolProgram/OnlineResources/LetsPlay\\_ToolKit.pdf](http://www.rickhansen.com/Portals/0/WhatWeDo/SchoolProgram/OnlineResources/LetsPlay_ToolKit.pdf).

Design discussion includes: diversity and inclusion; getting started on designing a good play space; selecting a designer. It includes schematic plans and photos of a well-designed universally accessible play space.

Ontario Parks Association. **Playspace Accessibility Training: A guide to barrier-free play spaces and accessibility for all.** [www.ontarioparksassociation.memberlodge.com/Accessibility](http://www.ontarioparksassociation.memberlodge.com/Accessibility).

### Other Resources:

Playworld Systems. (2013). **Inclusive Play Design Guide.** [http://playworldsystems.com/why\\_playworld/inclusive\\_play](http://playworldsystems.com/why_playworld/inclusive_play).

Includes sections on: planning and preparation; layout; access selecting playground equipment.

Let Kids Play website. **Learn How to Design an Accessible Playground Using Universal Design Principles.** [www.letkidsplay.com/ideas\\_for\\_accessible\\_playgrounds.html](http://www.letkidsplay.com/ideas_for_accessible_playgrounds.html).

**Accessible Playspaces for Everyone** website. [www.allabilitieswelcome.ca/Playspaces](http://www.allabilitieswelcome.ca/Playspaces).



# E. Exterior Paths of Travel

## Definition and Application

**Exterior paths of travel:** refers to sidewalks or walkways and their associated elements, such as ramps, stairs, curb ramps, **rest areas** and accessible pedestrian signs.

Standard applies to:

- newly constructed and redeveloped exterior paths of travel that are outdoor sidewalks or walkways designed and constructed for pedestrian travel and are intended to serve a functional purpose and not to provide a recreational experience. [s. 80.21(1)]; and
- all organizations listed in Table 2.1 (other than small private and not-for-profit organizations with 1–49 employees). [s.80.22].

Standard does not apply to:

- paths of travel regulated under the Ontario Building Code (e.g., exterior walks connected to a building, for which the Code sets minimum requirements for exterior barrier-free paths of travel, as well as setting requirements for curb ramps).<sup>15</sup>

## Summary of Technical Requirements [s. 80.23]

New, or redeveloped, exterior paths of travel must:

- meet minimum clear width (1.5 m) and height (2.1 m) specifications;
- have cane detectability requirements for head room obstructions;
- meet maximum **running slope** ratios;
- have a firm, stable and slip-resistant surface;
- meet restrictions on the size of surface openings (must not allow passage of an object that has a diameter of more than 20 mm), and orient elongated openings perpendicular to the direction of travel;
- meet maximum **cross slope** ratios of no more than 1:20, where the surface is asphalt, concrete or some other hard surface, or no more than 1:10 in all other cases;
- meet specifications on ratios for **bevel** at changes in levels, ratios for maximum **running slope** at changes in levels and ramp requirements at changes in levels; and
- provide minimum clear width at its entrance, regardless of design (e.g., gate, bollard, etc.).

### Terminology

**Rest area:** For recreational trails and exterior paths of travel, a rest area is a dedicated, level area that is intended for public use to allow people to stop or sit.

### Terminology

**Running slope:** the slope of a surface that is parallel to the direction of travel.

**Cross slope:** the slope of a surface that is perpendicular to the direction of travel.

**Bevel:** a small slope that helps an individual negotiate an elevation change.

<sup>15</sup> **Barrier-Free Path of Travel (Common Access and Circulation).** [www.mah.gov.on.ca/Page10167.aspx](http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/Page10167.aspx).

Sections 80.24–80.29 of the Standard set out requirements for these elements when they are part of exterior paths of travel:

- ramps
- stairs
- curb ramps
- depressed curbs
- accessible pedestrian signals
- rest areas

Exceptions and limitations of these requirements are described in Sections 80.30 and 80.31.

## Summary of Consultation Requirements for Rest Areas Only [s. 80.29]

Consultation requirements apply to:

- designated public sector organizations; and
- large private and not-for-profit organizations with 50 or more employees.

Organizations must consult on the design and placement of **rest areas** along the exterior path of travel.

Organizations must consult with the public and people with disabilities. Municipalities have additional consultation requirements with their accessibility advisory committee (where established). See Section 5.0 of this guidebook for information about community consultation for accessibility.

## Promising Practices

The following photos illustrate a number of promising accessible design practices.



*Marydale Park: firm and stable path surface (photo courtesy Catholic Youth Organization)*



*Crosby Park: spaces provided beside park benches for wheelchair users so people can sit/rest together, and long drop curb for accessible drop-off/pick-up (photo courtesy Town of Richmond Hill)*



*Crosby Park: pathway with high tonal contrast visual/cane strip (photo courtesy Town of Richmond Hill)*



*Crosby Park: path to water feature with non-linear wheelchair track to promote imaginative activity (photo courtesy Town of Richmond Hill)*



*Marydale Park: accessible, compacted gravel pathway is an example of a firm and stable surface (photo courtesy Catholic Youth Organization)*

## Project Considerations (for Exterior Paths of Travel)

As outlined in other sections, the exterior paths of travel can help improve accessibility for an entire park or a specific recreation site within a larger area.

- The main consideration is that path width should accommodate various types of use (e.g., two wheelchairs side-by-side; two-way traffic flow, etc.). Collaboration among different departments in a municipality (e.g., parks and recreation, planning, transportation) will lead to a better overall design and more effective planning and implementation.
- Consultation with the community will be essential to determine the best, and most cost-effective, design and placement of rest areas.

## F. Accessible Parking

### Off-street Parking: Definition and Application

**Off-street parking facilities:** includes open area parking lots and structures intended for the temporary parking of vehicles by the public, and includes visitor parking in these lots/structures. People may or may not have to pay to use off-street parking.

Standard applies to:

- all organizations listed in Table 2.1 that construct new or redevelop off-street parking facilities that they intend to maintain. [s. 80.32].

Standard does **not** apply to:

Off-street parking facilities that are used exclusively for one of the following [s. 80.33 (1)]:

1. Parking for buses.
2. Parking for delivery vehicles.
3. Parking for law enforcement vehicles.
4. Parking for medical transportation vehicles, such as ambulances.
5. Parking used as a parking lot for impounded vehicles.

The requirements do **not** apply if [s. 80.33 (2)]:

- a. the off-street parking facilities are not located on a barrier-free path of travel regulated under Ontario's Building Code (i.e., exterior walks connected to a building); **and**
- b. the obligated organization has multiple off-street parking facilities on a single site that serve a building or facility.

## Summary of Technical Requirements [s. 80.34 – 80.38]

Technical requirements apply to off-street parking only. This section of the standard is very detailed; only a general overview is provided here. As with all sections, it is recommended that this guidebook be used in conjunction with the Standard. When constructing new or redeveloping existing off-street parking, obligated organizations must:

- provide two types of accessible parking spaces (standard and wider) with technical specifications; and
- provide a minimum number of each type of accessible parking spaces based on total number of parking spaces.



*Accessible parking signage*



*Accessible parking spaces  
(photo courtesy City of Toronto)*

## Promising Practices

### Project Considerations (for Off-street Parking)

When choosing a site for a new/redeveloped park/play space consider the availability of, or options to provide, a parking lot that is adjacent to the planned recreation area, to make it as easy as possible for people with disabilities to get to, and use, the facilities. As noted above, inter-departmental collaboration (e.g., recreation, transportation, engineering, planning, etc.) in planning and design will help ensure a space that integrates all elements of access, including proximate parking, exterior paths of travel to/from the park or play space, and seamless access to the space from these pathways.

### On-street Parking: Definition and Application

**On-street parking:** includes parking spaces located on a highway, street, avenue, parkway, bridge or similar type of road. On-street parking may provide direct access to shops, offices and other facilities. People may or may not need to pay to use on-street parking.

Accessible on-street parking requirements only apply to the following designated public sector organizations:

- municipalities
- school boards
- colleges and universities
- hospitals
- public transportation organizations

### Summary of Consultation Requirements [s. 80.39]

Consultation requirements apply to on-street parking only.

Consultation requirements apply to designated public sector organizations listed above, which must consult on need, location and design of accessible on-street parking spaces when constructing new or redeveloping existing on-street parking spaces.

Organizations must consult with the public and people with disabilities. Municipalities have additional consultation requirements with their accessibility advisory committee (where established).

See Section 5.0 of this guidebook for information about community consultation for accessibility.

## Project Considerations (for on-street parking)

For example, when choosing a site for a new/redeveloped park/play space with limited accessible parking (e.g., in a densely populated urban neighbourhood), there needs to be careful consideration of the capacity of nearby off-street parking and on-street parking to serve the park/play space with:

- accessible, safe spaces for loading and unloading for all vehicles types (i.e., cars, vans, all-trans);
- minimal conflicts with moving traffic;
- exterior paths of travel to/from the park or play space; and
- seamless access to the space from these pathways.

Providing accessible parking and seamless access from parking areas to the park/play space may require changes to facilities off-site, which can be anticipated through inter-departmental planning and assessment. Local, accessible transit may offset the need for parking. The availability of these services and stop locations at/near the destination, therefore, should also be considered.

## G. Obtaining Services (e.g., service counters)

Standard applies to:

- all newly constructed service counters and fixed queuing guides, and all newly constructed or redeveloped waiting areas. [s. 80.40(1)]; and
- all obligated organizations listed in Table 2.1.

The requirements apply whether the elements are in buildings or out-of-doors. [s. 80.40(2)] As many recreation facilities have service counters, this will be an integral element of the overall design of a facility for accessibility.

## Summary of Technical Requirements

### Service Counters [s. 80.41]

When constructing new service counters, including replacing existing service counters, the following requirements must be met:

- There must be a minimum of **one service counter that accommodates a mobility aid** for each type of service provided (e.g., regular, express, self-service), and the accessible service counter must be clearly identified with signage, where there is more than one queuing line and service counter.
- Where a single queuing line serves a single or multiple counters, each service counter must accommodate a mobility aid.



The **service counter that accommodates mobility aids** must meet the following requirements:

- The countertop height must be usable by a person seated in a mobility aid.
- There must be sufficient knee clearance for a person seated in a mobility aid, where a forward approach to the counter is required (as opposed to a side approach counter found in many large grocery stores).
- The floor space in front of the counter must be sufficiently clear to accommodate a mobility aid.



*Reception desks and counters that allow for a frontal approach with adequate toe plate and knee space and have a suitable surface height<sup>16</sup>*

## Fixed Queuing Guides [s. 80.42]

A fixed queuing guide is a permanent/built feature that shows people where to line up and follow a path to a service point (e.g., entrance to a park where a fixed queuing guide is used to lead to a ticket purchasing booth).

Newly constructed fixed queuing guides must:

- provide sufficient width to allow for the passage of mobility aids, such as wheelchairs, and mobility assistive devices, such as walkers or canes;
- have sufficiently clear floor area to permit mobility aids to turn where queuing lines change direction;
- be cane detectable.

## Waiting Areas [s. 80.43]

Accessible seating means a space in a seating area where an individual using a mobility aid can wait.

When constructing a new waiting area or redeveloping an existing waiting area, where the seating is fixed to the floor, a minimum of three per cent of the new seating must be accessible. In all cases, at least one accessible seating space must be provided.

<sup>16</sup> Source for captioned photos:

[www.humanrights.gov.au/publications/good-bad-and-ugly-design-and-construction-access-0#issue9](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/publications/good-bad-and-ugly-design-and-construction-access-0#issue9)

## H. Maintenance of Accessible Elements

**Maintenance:** activities that are intended to keep existing public spaces and elements in existing public spaces in good working order or to restore the spaces or elements to their original condition, examples of which include painting and minor repairs.

Standard applies to:

- all organizations with multi-year accessibility plan requirements under Section 4 of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (all organizations in Table 2.1 other than small private and not-for-profit organizations with 1–49 employees).

### Summary of Maintenance Planning Requirements [s. 80.44]:

This requirement focuses on **documenting** procedures for preventative and emergency maintenance of accessible elements, and procedures for handling temporary disruptions.

A multi-year accessibility plan outlines an organization's strategy to prevent and remove barriers and meet its obligations under the Regulation.

Organizations (except small private and not-for-profit) must make sure that their multi-year accessibility plans include the following information:

- Procedures for preventative and emergency maintenance of the accessible parts of their public spaces (e.g., vandalism to an accessible play space; a broken bench or picnic table at a rest area).
- Procedures for handling temporary disruptions when an accessible part of their public spaces is not useable, such as putting up a sign explaining the disruption and outlining an alternative (under the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service, all organizations are required to let the public know when their facilities or services that people with disabilities usually use are temporarily unavailable).

This requirement comes into effect based on an organization's compliance timelines for the Design of Public Spaces Standard.



# Section 4: Planning for Accessibility

## Relevant Local Planning Policies

The Design of Public Spaces Standard is not yet fully in effect,<sup>17</sup> but because of planning cycles, municipalities and other obligated organizations must begin preparing now for implementation. For example, large and small designated public sector organizations must integrate accessibility in their procurement practices [s. 5].

As indicated previously, applying the Standard will also require consultation with the community. Section 5.0 of this guidebook talks about community consultation requirements and approaches in more detail. Proactive organizations, therefore, may choose to begin planning for its implementation now. This will ensure additional time to formalize community consultation processes; integrate the Standard in current approaches to planning, designing and developing affected services; and make procurement decisions that are supported by coordinated planning.

The following sections deal largely with planning for municipalities. However, the principles of consultation and long-range planning can also be used by not-for-profit organizations and other corporate bodies, such as conservation authorities.

## Accessibility Policies and Multi-Year Accessibility Plans

As required by the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation:

1. All organizations, **except small private and not-for-profit organizations**, must have both:
  - a. accessibility policies that articulate the organization's intent to become more accessible, and
  - b. a multi-year accessibility plan.
2. **Small private and not-for-profit organizations** are only required to have accessibility policies. Although not required to prepare a multi-year accessibility plan, they may choose to also develop plans or work programs that support their policies.

“The Design of Public Spaces Standard allows some flexibility in the way accessibility requirements are to be implemented and organizations can meet their obligations within this latitude. Procurement requirements under the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation, however, speak to the need for accessibility to be taken into account throughout **all purchasing decisions**. Where it is not possible to incorporate accessible design, criteria or features, it must be documented and a rationale provided upon request. This supports a formal, comprehensive approach to decision making for accessibility.”

– Sarah Moore, Committee/  
Accessibility Coordinator, Legislative  
& Information Services, Town of Ajax

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<sup>17</sup> at time of publication

## Promising Practices

Port Coquitlam B.C. adopted a **Corporate Accessible Play Spaces Policy** in June 2013, to ensure that “any new or substantially renovated city playgrounds will meet or exceed the **Canadian Standards Association’s standard for accessible play spaces (Annex H)** throughout their lifetime... Annex H provides specifications for playground elements (such as layout, circulation paths and play components) that are incorporated in the planning process.”<sup>18</sup> It establishes minimum accessibility requirements for newly-constructed play spaces as well as renovations and retrofits. It provides specifications for elements within a play area to create a general level of usability for children with disabilities. Emphasis is placed on ensuring that children with disabilities are generally able to access the diversity of components provided in a play area.<sup>19</sup> The Coquitlam policy addresses the application of Annex H in terms of site plan design and equipment layout, construction and maintenance responsibilities. Coquitlam’s policy alignment with Annex H is not an endorsement of Annex H’s concurrence with the Ontario Design of Public Spaces Standard. It is simply an example of how Annex H has been used to guide the development of an accessibility policy in one community.

A multi-year accessibility plan must outline an organization’s strategy to prevent and remove barriers and meet its obligations under the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation. A guide and templates to preparing this plan are available in the following publication: Government of Ontario, **Developing Accessibility Policies and a Multi-Year Accessibility Plan**.

Many obligated organizations have had multi-year accessibility plans in place for a number of years. These plans provide direction or strategies for addressing all accessibility requirements in service provision. As these plans are reviewed and updated at least once every five years, the requirements of the Design of Public Spaces Standard will be incorporated in their work programs in the short-term, if they have not already been addressed in their accessibility plan.

There are a variety of approaches to accessibility plans – from complex to simple – depending on community size and need. Whether short or long, simple or complex, an accessibility plan will be more successful if there is corporate recognition of the importance of inclusion. The resource list at the end of this section includes links to several examples:

- **City of London Accessibility Plan (2011)**
- **Town of Ajax Accessibility in Action Plan 2012–2017**
- **Town of Richmond Hill Accessibility Plan 2013–2018**
- **Removing Barriers: 2003 Accessibility Plan for the Town of Hearst Planning Department**

## Accessibility Plans, Policies and Parks and Recreation Services


Figure 4.1 outlines the relationship between various types of policies and plans that municipalities, or other large organizations, may have and that potentially link accessibility of outdoor spaces to parks and recreation services.

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<sup>18</sup> City of Port Coquitlam. (June 29, 2013). **Leading-Edge Policy Ensures Future Playgrounds are Accessible to All**. Press Release.

<sup>19</sup> **Accessible Playspaces for Everyone**. [www.allabilitieswelcome.ca/Playspaces/](http://www.allabilitieswelcome.ca/Playspaces/).

**Figure 4.1: Municipal Plans and the Design of Public Spaces Standard**

Type of Policy or Plan		Integration of Standard
Corporate policy (e.g., Strategic Plan, Official Plan, Sustainability Plan)		incorporate overarching aspirations regarding creating an accessible community as expressed in Accessibility Policies
Multi-Year Accessibility Plan - intent is to identify, remove and prevent barriers in all areas of corporate service		consolidates all substantive area plans/projects specific to improving accessibility
Substantive Plans Dealing with Outdoor Public Spaces	Examples of Possible Plan Elements Covered by Standard	
parks, recreation and culture master plan	play spaces, eating areas, parking, paths of travel, recreational trails, beach access routes, rest areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• develop Corporate vision/policy on accessibility into directions in substantive areas covered by each plan</li> <li>• make recommendations on providing new/redeveloping existing outdoor spaces covered by the Design of Public Spaces Standard that move into capital budget planning, design and construction</li> <li>• assign priority to recommendations</li> <li>• can include formal local development standards to be applied to future development or redevelopment</li> </ul>
waterfront master plan	beach access routes, eating areas, play spaces, parking, paths of travel	
trails master plan	recreational trails, parking, paths of travel, eating areas, rest areas	
(active) transportation master plan	paths of travel, recreational trails, parking	
tourism master plan	recreational trails, beach access routes, parking, paths of travel, rest areas	



**Top Tip:**

It is important to use consistent terminology (see Section 3.0, page 10 of this guidebook) across all organizational plans and policies. This will help ensure that all stakeholders understand what is being communicated through policies and principles and will help avoid confusion and possible conflict.

## Local Development Standards

Master Plans may include local development standards that articulate how different types of public spaces are to be developed. The following example descriptions from the Town of Ajax help to distinguish between **accessible** and **inclusive** parks/playgrounds.

**Accessible playgrounds/parks:** may incorporate elements such as accessible picnic tables, shade areas, ramps/curb cuts on access routes, walkways, surfacing and some universal play equipment elements, where feasible.

**Inclusive playgrounds/parks:** usually involve a higher consideration for universal accessible play features; appeal to a broader range of abilities such as with the inclusion of sensory elements; look at accessibility considerations beyond physical ability and ground level elements; and are typically considered with larger neighbourhood parks/playgrounds.

These types of definitions can be used to formulate consistent, local development planning standards within other planning documents. They can be used as a starting point for implementing the legislated Standard in, for example, a Parks and Recreation Master Plan. They could also be integrated into existing parks classifications (e.g., neighbourhood, community, city, region-serving) or might lend themselves to rethinking current classification systems to better incorporate new local planning standards.

While some communities – either explicitly or implicitly – aspire to inclusivity in all cases, how the Standard is implemented for facilities such as play spaces will depend on local circumstances. The need to consider many sites of varying sizes and service levels (e.g., in a large municipality) in relation to community needs and public finance may support distinctions by type of space, such as those noted above, or other characteristics that relate specifically to opportunities and constraints to improving accessibility.

As discussed in Section 3.0 of this guidebook, locational considerations may help identify the play spaces on which a community should focus early efforts in accessibility improvements, since developing or redeveloping a play space that is adjacent to a parking lot in a community park may 1) be more quickly achieved; and 2) serve a larger number of users, than otherwise investing in a more remote and less frequented location. Alternately, a small municipality with few community parks has a limited number of play spaces to consider and may, therefore, choose to maximize inclusivity at all sites. Considerations such as these can be used to help determine development/redevelopment priorities during the master planning stage.



Master plan-based local development standards can be used to confirm the community's agreed-upon aspirations and priorities for incorporating accessibility in various types of public spaces.

## Resources

### Relevant Planning Policies

City of Coquitlam, British Columbia. **Corporate Accessible Play Spaces Policy and Report to Council.** [www.prontario.org/index.php?ci\\_id=9043](http://www.prontario.org/index.php?ci_id=9043).

**Canadian Standards Association's standard for accessible play spaces (Annex H).**  
[www.allabilitieswelcome.ca/Playspaces/files/Annex\\_H\\_Guidebook.pdf](http://www.allabilitieswelcome.ca/Playspaces/files/Annex_H_Guidebook.pdf).

**City of London Accessibility Plan.** (2011).  
[www.london.ca/city-hall/accessibility/Pages/Accessibility-at-the-City-of-London.aspx](http://www.london.ca/city-hall/accessibility/Pages/Accessibility-at-the-City-of-London.aspx).

Government of Ontario. **Developing Accessibility Policies and a Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.**  
[www.ontario.ca/AccessON](http://www.ontario.ca/AccessON).

**Town of Ajax Accessibility in Action Plan 2012–2017.**  
[www.ajax.ca/en/insidetownhall/resources/AjaxAccessibilityinActionPlan2012-2017.pdf](http://www.ajax.ca/en/insidetownhall/resources/AjaxAccessibilityinActionPlan2012-2017.pdf).

**Town of Richmond Hill Accessibility Plan 2013–2018.**  
[www.richmondhill.ca/documents/2013\\_2017\\_accessibility\\_plan.pdf](http://www.richmondhill.ca/documents/2013_2017_accessibility_plan.pdf).

**Removing Barriers: 2003 Accessibility Plan for the Town of Hearst Planning Department.**  
[www.hearst.ca/doc\\_uploads/hearst/anglais/documents/town-hall/accessibility-committee/Accessibility-Plan.pdf](http://www.hearst.ca/doc_uploads/hearst/anglais/documents/town-hall/accessibility-committee/Accessibility-Plan.pdf).

## Project Planning and Design

### Project Planning and Management

Every municipality has its own procedures for project planning and management, which will now need to integrate the requirements of the Design of Public Spaces Standard. Like many communities, the Town of Ajax has an accessibility advisory committee, and a Committee/Accessibility Coordinator who is responsible for the accessibility portfolio.

The Coordinator is staff liaison to the Town's Accessibility Advisory Committee and maintains open communication with staff across all departments with regard to provincial accessibility requirements and compliance.

As an example, Figure 4.2 outlines the Town's project development process for a park/play space, which is likely typical of many, and relates it to considerations for integrating accessibility requirements.

“...the road to actual implementation of the [local] standard at the local level is not necessarily an easy one. At the outset of the Edmonton journey, a communications strategy was prepared to show the importance of extending accessibility measures to the playground. Design, construction and operations staff needed to be educated on the [local] standard's content, and adjustments were required to related policies and procedures. Finally, advocates needed to make the case to management that just as with safety, the [local] standard had to be applied to all new and renovated play spaces.”  
– Alberta Centre for Active Living. Physical Activity for All. Success Stories. 2010

**Figure 4.2 Integrating Accessibility in Project Planning and Design**

Park/Play Space Development Process	Integrating Accessibility Into Project Planning/Design
<p>Recreation, Parks and Culture Master Plan provides direction on the need and timing for park/playground development/redevelopment, which moves projects into capital budget.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Town’s multi-year accessibility plan aligns with the capital budget forecast. It is a five-year plan with an annual review in conjunction with budget planning. A report on the plan’s achievements and newly-identified initiatives is submitted annually to Council. Content on initiatives is provided through consultation with staff from all departments.</li> <li>• Accessible projects/elements of projects are absorbed in the total project budget of relevant departments.</li> </ul>
<p>Staff review priorities and objectives of the Master Plan to identify how parks/park-based facilities can be designed and developed to meet identified needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transitioning to compliance with the Design of Public Spaces Standards, the Town considers its Accessibility Design Guidelines for municipal projects and is increasing consultation and design consideration of inclusive playgrounds.</li> <li>• Planning for accessibility on individual projects typically involves presentations to the accessibility advisory committee for feedback, prior to presenting recommendations to standing committees of Council, and ultimately Council. (depending on project complexity, may go back and forth between staff and these various bodies before going to standing committees in draft form, and may come back from Council for additional work/review/clarification and/or additional public input)*</li> </ul>

\* See Section 5.0 on Community Consultation



Park/Play Space Development Process	Integrating Accessibility Into Project Planning/Design
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inter-departmental coordination is managed by an in-house Parks Design Review Team that meets monthly and comprises staff from the planning, engineering, operations and recreation departments.</li> <li>• Parks Design Review Team provides opportunity for all departments to contribute project-specific feedback and share information with relevant departments (e.g., recreation staff consider impact of the project on existing programming and opportunities for new programming; operations staff consider maintenance requirements).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overall responsibility for accessibility sits within the decision-making/departamental structure overseeing a project.</li> </ul>

## Engaging Outside Expertise

In municipalities with qualified staff in-house, design work can sometimes be done without contracting outside expertise. Not-for-profit projects, small municipalities and large municipal projects, however, often require contracted professionals for project coordination and design. Construction is typically tendered to outside firms. There are two principle approaches to project design and construction: design-build and construction management.

### Design-build Contracts

In design-build contracts, the owner engages a contractor to **design** and **build** the project (e.g., playground) based on a scope of work and a fixed budget. The contractor assumes responsibility for the process of engaging the various design professionals and tradespeople to produce a finished playground.

The advantage to this approach is a guaranteed price for a playground, unless extra expenditures are approved. The disadvantage is that the client does not have control over the design of the finished product: while the contract guarantees a playground, there is no way of knowing what the playground will look like, since the scope of work is not detailed and may be interpreted as the contractor sees fit to meet the established budget.

## Construction Management Contracts

In a construction management contract, the owner engages a project manager to assemble a team of qualified professionals who are responsible for designing the playground to meet the client's expectations. A contractor is then engaged through a tendering process to build the playground based on the client's approved design.

The advantage to this approach is that the client knows what the final product will be, before construction is tendered. The disadvantage is that the budget for construction will not be known until the quotations are submitted, and these will likely vary. At the same time, a competent designer can work to an approximate budget so that the construction quotations will fall within an anticipated range. In a construction management approach, the client participates in the selection of the professionals who will work on the team and so can feel more confident in this process.

Although in both cases the contracting organizations must ensure that the project complies with the Design of Public Spaces Standard (whether or not they are incorporated in organizational design guidelines), the actual product may vary widely between the two approaches.

Transitioning to the Standard will take some time and learning on the part of obligated organizations. It is the responsibility of the obligated organization hiring the contractor to ensure compliance of its projects. Further, ensuring the desired outcome for an accessible play space, for example, likely requires more rigorous control than might be the case for other types of spaces (e.g., warehouse, garage, etc.). Since a play space must respond directly to specific, user-identified needs for people to be able to use it, it is necessary to retain sufficient control to be able to specify requirements throughout the process. For these reasons, a construction management approach to design and development will provide the contracting organization with the necessary control over the process and product to ensure outcomes meet legislated requirements, community-identified needs, and any relevant municipal development standards.

## Local Design Guidelines

Local design guidelines comprise very specific, technical directions on how to incorporate accessibility requirements in the planning, design and development of individual projects. ***Annex H of the Canadian Standards Association's Children's Playspaces and Equipment Standard*** "spells out the minimum requirements of what constitutes an accessible play space. The Annex document is best applied to new play space developments. It can also be applied to renovation or retrofit projects."

Annex H generally does two things. First it identifies **what** is to be accessible for people with disabilities. Second, the Annex spells out necessary specifications for **how** this is to be achieved.

Local design guidelines for public spaces that are governed by the Standard are generally included in comprehensive municipal documents that cover these for all indoor and outdoor facilities and spaces. Examples include:

- One of the most comprehensive municipal design guidelines in Ontario was developed by the City of London and is entitled **2007 Facility Accessibility Design Standards**.
- Other municipalities (e.g., Town of Ajax, Municipality of Trent Hills) throughout the province have adapted London's guidelines to suit local needs.
- **Toronto's Accessibility Design Guidelines (2004) Part 1: Exterior Areas** focuses on outdoor public spaces.

These documents may provide a good starting point for this exercise if your organization needs to develop design guidelines.

Checklists are also useful for auditing existing and planned public spaces and related facilities to ensure all necessary requirements are addressed in any new developments or significant redevelopments.

- The City of Edmonton has a **Checklist for Accessibility and Universal Design in Architecture**. While this checklist is not specific to outdoor areas or parks/recreation, it includes elements such as parking areas, signage, handrails and ramps that are common to such spaces.
- Both publications by SPH Planning and Consulting Ltd. – **Trails and Beach Access Routes** and **Inclusive Playspace Design Guide** – contain itemized checklists for these spaces, respectively.

#### A word about design guidelines:

There are a number of exemplary sets of accessibility design guidelines that were developed by Ontario municipalities before the introduction of the Design of Public Spaces Standard. These documents can serve as starting points for organizations that need to develop their own guidelines. As noted elsewhere, the Design of Public Spaces Standard sets minimum requirements. In many cases, municipal design guidelines exceed these minimums. In situations where this is not the case or where there is a conflict, however, the requirements of the Design of Public Spaces Standard supersedes all others.

## Resources

Canadian Standards Association (2007). **Children's Playspaces and Equipment Standard (CAN/CSA Z164-07). Annex H: Children's playspaces and equipment that are accessible to persons with disabilities**. [www.allabilitieswelcome.ca/Playspaces/files/Annex\\_H\\_Guidebook.pdf](http://www.allabilitieswelcome.ca/Playspaces/files/Annex_H_Guidebook.pdf).

#### **City of London 2007 Facility Accessibility Design Standards.**

[www.london.ca/city-hall/accessibility/Pages/Accessibility-at-the-City-of-London.aspx](http://www.london.ca/city-hall/accessibility/Pages/Accessibility-at-the-City-of-London.aspx).

City of Toronto. (2004). **Accessibility Design Guidelines, Part 1: Exterior Areas**. [www1.toronto.ca/static\\_files/equity\\_diversity\\_and\\_human\\_rights\\_office/pdf/accessibility\\_design\\_guidelines.pdf](http://www1.toronto.ca/static_files/equity_diversity_and_human_rights_office/pdf/accessibility_design_guidelines.pdf).

Toronto Public Space Initiative. **Accesibility Design Guidelines Overview**.

<http://publicspaces.ca/accessibility-design-guidelines-2/>.

#### **Town of Ajax 2007 Facility Accessibility Design Guidelines.**

[www.ajax.ca/en/livinginajax/resources/TownofAjaxAccessibilityDesignGuidelines2007.pdf](http://www.ajax.ca/en/livinginajax/resources/TownofAjaxAccessibilityDesignGuidelines2007.pdf).

**Municipality of Trent Hills 2007 Facility Accessibility Design Standards.**  
[http://trenthills.ca/en/services/resources/Accessibility\\_Design\\_Standards.pdf](http://trenthills.ca/en/services/resources/Accessibility_Design_Standards.pdf).

City of Edmonton. **Checklist for Accessibility and Universal Design in Architecture.**  
[www.edmonton.ca/for\\_residents/AccessibilityChecklist2008.pdf](http://www.edmonton.ca/for_residents/AccessibilityChecklist2008.pdf).

SPH Planning and Consulting Ltd. (2011/2012). **Trails and Beach Access Routes.** Adapted from the original Accessibility Design Guidelines prepared for the City of Markham (June 2011) and updated for the City of Ottawa (2012).

SPH Planning and Consulting Ltd. (2011). **Inclusive Playspace Design Guide.** Adapted from original Accessibility Design Guidelines prepared for the City of Markham (June 2011).

## Costs

As noted, creating accessible outdoor spaces can be more expensive than traditional installations. However, a well-planned and high quality inclusive public space will benefit the entire community. The following sections provide some considerations when approaching planning and budgeting.

### The Go-forward Nature of the Legislation

First, it is important to recall that the Standard only applies to new construction or significant redevelopment of existing spaces. The costs to ensure accessibility, therefore, will be marginal to work that needs to be undertaken anyway. Careful planning and design may also afford opportunities to minimize additional costs.

It is also important to note that many organizations are embracing a vision of inclusivity in the provision of all their services and accept increased costs as integral to achieving this vision. In essence, this is simply a reflection of a shift in social values that recognizes the rights of everyone to participate fully in community life. In this view, the Design of Public Spaces Standard can help clarify **what** accessibility means in specific applications and so help limit potential costs in implementation, while ensuring a minimum consistency across multiple applications.

### Considerations That May Impact Costs

The Design of Public Spaces Standard introduces new elements into the coordination of planning and development activities. For example, facilitating accessibility from a locational perspective might include minimizing the travel distance from a parking lot and/or park entry to a play space. This might mean rethinking approaches to the planning of these areas.

A site's opportunities and constraints will have to be evaluated with accessibility in mind.

## Considerations That May Help Reduce or Offset Costs

The following highlights some factors to consider that might, where appropriate and feasible, help reduce or offset capital costs in providing accessible projects:

- Determine the nature of the experience you want to provide (e.g., if the intent is to experience nature, trail materials/design should be compatible with a natural setting).
- Research other comparable installations and talk with providers for ideas, recommendations, lessons learned, etc.
- Identify ongoing maintenance requirements in relation to capital costs, as it may be less expensive overall to accept higher capital costs if maintenance costs will be reduced.
- For new installations, avoid sites that may require environmental mitigation and select sites that require minimum preparation.
- Phase development to spread costs over time.
- Work with local equipment/material suppliers to reduce shipping-related transportation costs.
- Consider what existing sites have to offer over potential new sites (e.g., geographic proximity to potential users, minimal site preparation, existing pathways and equipment to use/redevelop).
- Consider focusing on natural elements vs. manufactured equipment and incorporate site features in the design.
- Hire qualified, accessibility experienced expert(s) (e.g. landscape architect, playground designer, trails designer) who can evaluate cost options of above-noted and other factors, and recommend optimal design within available budget.

## Approaches to Financing

As with all capital projects, there are various approaches to financing and each community or organization adopts those that work best for locally specific circumstances. Often, financing comprises a mix of sources including organizational/municipal support, funding from other public/not-for-profit/private organizations, and community fundraising efforts.

Until now, municipalities and organizations in Ontario that have implemented accessible design of outdoor spaces have done so voluntarily. In some instances, the impetus for individual projects has come from individuals in the community who took the lead in mobilizing for change. One such example is Memorial Park in the Municipality of Port Hope.

Zac Andrus, a youth with cerebral palsy and a wheelchair user, was the prime motivator and lead fundraiser in a project that realized a fully accessible park for approximately \$125,000. The park has an accessible swing, monkey bars, braille and musical play pads, and slides with deep edges for safety, all of which are installed on a rubber surface.<sup>20</sup> Project costs were funded by a combination of donations from individual residents, corporations, and service clubs; public sector contributions comprised municipal and accessibility advisory committee support and an Ontario Trillium grant.

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<sup>20</sup> Source: [www.northumberlandnews.com/news-story/3761259-port-hope-teen-s-dream-of-accessible-playground-becomes-a-reality/](http://www.northumberlandnews.com/news-story/3761259-port-hope-teen-s-dream-of-accessible-playground-becomes-a-reality/)

Regardless of past practice with respect to design and development, provision for accessibility will now have to be incorporated in municipal/organizational budget planning as part of overall development plans for outdoor public spaces. Municipalities that have already incorporated accessibility considerations into budgeting have done so in different ways including one or more of the following:

- accessibility components of projects are integrated in individual project costs and do not appear as separate line items and, depending on the case, may or may not be more expensive than previous installations;
- the community's accessibility advisory committee is budgeted a certain amount every year to use as it sees fit;
- an annual budgeted amount is targeted to specific objectives (e.g., creating X km of new or redeveloped accessible trails);
- aligning the multi-year accessibility planning process with capital budget planning to ensure the former is reflected in the latter in a coordinated manner, with annual reports from staff to Council on achievements and new initiatives.

As noted above, the costs of accessible design can be greater than those associated with more traditional installations. Depending on available budgets, therefore, it may take longer to implement the Standard 'on-the-ground.' At the same time, community-based initiatives like the one in Port Hope can supplement municipal/organizational budgets to achieve accessibility in outdoor spaces more quickly.

Outside sources of funding for community parks and recreation projects are often available. In a complex and ever-changing funding environment, however, it is important to monitor available sources of funding for these projects, and particularly to keep track of potential non-traditional sources of support. Examples of four such current initiatives, and accessible outdoor spaces projects that were recently supported by these programs, are described below:

### **Kraft Celebration Tour (Kraft Canada)**

Awards of \$25,000 for the ten community projects out of 20 finalists from across the country that are judged by on-line voters to best demonstrate community spirit, passion for sports and a healthy and active lifestyle.

#### **Funded Projects with Accessible Elements:**

##### **Therapeutic Riding Program**

Creston, British Columbia | 2011 Census population: 5,306

Creston has used the \$25,000 to help make improvements to the Therapeutic Riding Facility, a program that teaches horseback riding to children and adults with disabilities. The money was put towards creating a permanent accessible washroom facility, fixing the mounting ramp, and purchasing a new horse.



### **THS Track Quest**

Trenton, Ontario | 2011 Census population for City of Quinte West: 43,086

The \$25,000 has gone to help a \$500,000 initiative (of which over \$400,000 has now been raised) to build a brand new track and field complex that will be used by students, seniors, people with disabilities, fire fighters, police, military personnel and families in general.

### **Aviva Community Fund (Aviva Insurance)**

- Grant program, whereby ideas for positive impact in communities compete in a series of “rounds” to determine the semi-finalists and finalists.
- All finalists receive from \$5,000 to \$150,000.
- Projects must be action-oriented, local to Canada, beneficial to many, priced under \$150,000 and executed by end of following year

### **Funded Projects with Accessible Elements:**

#### **Memorial Splash Pad**

Canora, Saskatchewan | 2011 Census population: 2,219

Chase was a giving 6-year old who was lost to his community in a tragic farming accident in 2011. His family decided to honour his memory by continuing his participation in his school’s ‘Pay it Forward’ project, which focuses on the idea that each of us can make a difference.

This splash park will be a place where friends and family of any age will be able to engage in healthy, barrier-free fun while creating memories to last a lifetime. This splash park will be comprised of a 3,400 square foot concrete pad with 18 splash components themed to reflect all the things Chase loved (farming, sports and the great outdoors). The municipality is donating the land for the park, making a financial contribution and assuming the ongoing maintenance and upkeep of the park.

#### **Lac La Biche Playground**

Lac La Biche, Alberta | 2011 Census population: 2,544

Community/school playground for children for ages 3 and up, accessible to children with disabilities allowing them to be active side-by-side with able-bodied children.

The Lac La Biche Active Kids Society led this project, from the planning stage through fundraising and to completion. They are a group comprised of parents, school staff, community members and representatives from various local organizations.

## Power Play Program (Hydro One)

- Grants of up to \$25,000 available for new/renovation capital projects for community centres, indoor or outdoor ice rinks, playgrounds, splash pads, sports fields.
- Program is open to municipalities and registered charities in communities where Hydro One is the local electricity supplier. The facility must be open and accessible to the community at large.
- Facilities with the primary purpose of supporting children’s community sports and active play.
- Priority is given where energy efficiency measures are incorporated in the project.

### Funded Projects with Accessible Elements:

#### **Wroxeter Park playground equipment**

Township of Howick, Ontario | 2011 Census population: 3,856

\$10,000 toward funding accessible new playground equipment in Wroxeter Park to enable local children with disabilities to participate in playground activity.

#### **Leamington Minor Soccer Association**

Municipality of Leamington, Ontario | 2011 Census population: 28,403

\$5,000 to add accessible playground equipment to the soccer complex grounds

## Enabling Accessibility Fund (Government of Canada)

- Supports community-based projects across Canada that improve accessibility, remove barriers and enable Canadians with disabilities to participate in and contribute to their communities.
- Includes streams for small and mid-sized projects.

### Funded Projects with Accessible Elements:

#### **Shillington Park Playground**

Township of Rideau Lakes, Ontario | 2011 Census population: 10,207

\$24,286 to build an accessible play structure, to include children with visual, mobility, and developmental disabilities as well as mothers with strollers. It is the only municipal play space with accessible components for children with disabilities to enjoy free play outdoors.

#### **Playground Equipment Accessibility Improvements at Woodview Park**

City of Oshawa, Ontario | 2011 Census population: 149,607

\$42,212 to install accessible playground equipment, swings, and accessible surfacing near an existing seating area in a community park. The existing non-accessible playground equipment was retrofitted. New swings, including one with an accessible seat, were installed in a new location adjacent to an accessible walkway. Sand surfacing was removed and replaced with engineered wood fiber surface.

## Bayview Memorial Park Accessible Playground


Township of Oro-Medonte, Ontario | 2011 Census population: 20,078

\$50,000 to develop an accessible play space. The design of this play environment incorporates areas for toddlers with a transfer module that caters specifically to this age range. It includes a structure with ramped access for the 5 to 12 year age range in the play structure and independent play apparatus in the swings, featuring a range of seat options and riding elements. An independent sensory wall provides a unique series of play experiences further enhancing the inclusive nature of this playground. The entire play surface is engineered wood fibre, which supports wheelchair propulsion and provides ease of use for a variety of assistive devices including walkers, canes, wheelchairs, etc. Users have access to the entire play area regardless of ability; all elements at ground level are considered accessible.

## Partnerships

For the types of spaces and facilities covered by the Design of Public Spaces Standard, one-time capital contributions from various sources (e.g., government grants, donations from local service clubs or private corporations) are generally the most common type of ‘partnership.’ These agreements must ensure that the parties contributing to a project that is owned and operated by another agency are satisfied with the way their share of the funding is being used. Typically, this is addressed in eligibility requirements for support.

The agency receiving contributions, however, should also consider the potential for concern on the part of contributing organizations – and particularly those that are community-based – if future changes are made to the spaces/projects that received financial assistance. Service clubs, for example, generally contribute capital to community projects to create a legacy. Such contributions, therefore, are best earmarked for projects that are guaranteed to meet the accessibility standards to which the agency has committed itself (i.e., the legislated minimum or more).



At Marydale Park in Hamilton, the Catholic Youth Organization (C.Y.O.) has a 25-year formal agreement with the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority for access to property and Lake Niapenco at the Binbrook Conservation Area, to permit the C.Y.O. to develop an accessible route to the dock area. As part of the agreement, the Binbrook Conservation Area will be moving a portion of their trail system onto to the C.Y.O.’s property.

## Promising Practice

Marydale Park is a barrier-free recreation facility in Hamilton, and is being built on 35 acres, adjacent to the Binbrook Conservation Area, along the eastern shore of Lake Niapenco, a 430-acre fresh water reservoir. Marydale Park was first conceived in 2003 and has been designed to meet and exceed the Design of Public Spaces Standard.

As a major development being undertaken by a not-for-profit organization, the park is a ‘work in progress.’ It is being developed and/or completed in phases as funding is secured and has, over the past eight years, received financial support from all three levels of government, community

organizations, foundations, corporations, local businesses and friends of the Catholic Youth Organization. Construction on the individual components does not proceed until capital is secured, which means, for example, that pathways – while currently hard packed and smooth – will eventually be paved to facilitate greater access.

## Resources

There are several resources available to assist in the detailed project planning, design and budgeting.

### Canadian Resources:

Stanfield, S. **Let's Play: Creating Accessible Play Spaces**. Rick Hansen Institute. [www.rickhansen.com/Portals/0/WhatWeDo/SchoolProgram/OnlineResources/LetsPlay\\_ToolKit.pdf](http://www.rickhansen.com/Portals/0/WhatWeDo/SchoolProgram/OnlineResources/LetsPlay_ToolKit.pdf).

Trails for All Ontarians Collaborative. (2006). **Ontario's Best Trails**. [www.ontariotrails.on.ca/assets/files/pdf/member-archives/reports/Ontario's%20Best%20Trails%20-%20%20Full%20Document.pdf](http://www.ontariotrails.on.ca/assets/files/pdf/member-archives/reports/Ontario's%20Best%20Trails%20-%20%20Full%20Document.pdf).

Parachute Canada. **Playground Accessibility**. [www.parachutecanada.org/injury-topics/item/playground-accessibility](http://www.parachutecanada.org/injury-topics/item/playground-accessibility).

### Other Resources:

Playworld Systems. (2013). **Inclusive Play Design Guide**. [http://letkidsplay.com/Inclusive\\_play\\_design\\_guide.html](http://letkidsplay.com/Inclusive_play_design_guide.html).

Playworld Systems. **Planning and Budgeting**. <http://playworldsystems.com/plan/budgeting>.

Employment and Social Development Canada. **Enabling Accessibility Fund**. [www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/disability/eaf/](http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/disability/eaf/).

Kraft Canada. **Kraft Celebration Tour**. [www.kraftcelebrationtour.ca/en](http://www.kraftcelebrationtour.ca/en).

- **Funded Projects with Accessible Elements**

Therapeutic Riding Program B.C. & THS Track Quest Ont.  
[www.kraftcelebrationtour.ca/en/past/2012/](http://www.kraftcelebrationtour.ca/en/past/2012/)

Aviva Insurance. **Aviva Community Fund**.

[www.avivacommunityfund.org/files/AvivaCommunityFund\\_2013.pdf](http://www.avivacommunityfund.org/files/AvivaCommunityFund_2013.pdf).

- **Funded Projects with Accessible Elements**

Memorial Splash Pad Sask. [www.avivacommunityfund.org/ideas/acf13447](http://www.avivacommunityfund.org/ideas/acf13447)  
Lac La Biche Playground Alta. [www.avivacommunityfund.org/ideas/acf14955](http://www.avivacommunityfund.org/ideas/acf14955)

Hydro One. **Power Play Program**.

[www.hydroone.com/OurCommitment/Community/Pages/powerplay.aspx](http://www.hydroone.com/OurCommitment/Community/Pages/powerplay.aspx).

# Section 5: Community Consultation

## Rationale for Community Consultation

Several sections of the Design of Public Spaces Standard require obligated organizations to consult with the public and people with disabilities. This means that the community must come together to decide how best to make outdoor public spaces accessible to all residents and visitors.

Municipalities must also consult with their accessibility advisory committee, where one has been established. Every Ontario municipality of 10,000+ residents must have an accessibility advisory committee comprising volunteers, the majority of whom are people with disabilities. The committee is charged with reviewing project plans and advising Council on barriers to accessibility that these contain. Their duties also include advising Council about the requirements and implementation of the AODA accessibility standards and preparation of accessibility reports.<sup>21</sup>

There is much to be gained from open dialogue about how your community will implement the Standard. It will be applied in many different settings throughout the province and, for many communities, it will mean a change in the way things are done. Further, there is no single correct way to go about engaging in these discussions. All stakeholders must have the opportunity to be involved, however, to ensure that:

1. the decisions taken maximize opportunities for everyone in the community to use outdoor spaces to participate in recreation; and
2. all sectors of the community are aware of the need to embrace change.

## When and Whom to Consult

### Multi-Year Accessibility Plans

Organizations must have accessibility policies and a multi-year accessibility plan in place according to the following timelines:

- Large designated public sector organizations – by January 1, 2013.
- Small designated public sector organizations and large private and not-for-profit organizations – by January 1, 2014.
- Small private and not-for-profit organizations are required to have accessibility policies, but are **not** required to prepare an accessibility plan – by January 1, 2015.

Consultation with 1) people with disabilities; and 2) their accessibility advisory committee (where one has been established) is a requirement for designated public sector organizations, including municipalities, when establishing, reviewing and updating their multi-year accessibility plans. Large private and not-for-profit organizations are **not** required to consult on their accessibility plan.

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<sup>21</sup> *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*

Municipalities and organizations are increasingly aspiring to inclusive design, which often exceeds minimum accessibility requirements, and this suggests the need to collectively determine the community’s vision to be implemented in its plans.

For those public sector organizations that adopted multi-year accessibility plans prior to the introduction of the Standard, future community reviews/updates of their accessibility plan can incorporate the Design of Public Spaces Standard requirements. In the interim, the specifications can be incorporated in plans for individual projects for new or redeveloped outdoor public spaces, which may be subject to public review/input.<sup>22</sup> For public sector organizations that are in the process of developing their multi-year accessibility plans, the Design of Public Spaces Standard can be integrated as part of this consultation process and reflected in the plan.

Table 5.1 summarizes the requirements for consultation relating to the Design of Public Spaces Standard.

**Table 5.1: Summary of Consultation Requirements**

Item	Consultation Requirements
<p><b>Multi-Year Accessibility Plan [s. 4 (2)]</b></p> <hr/> <p>Consultation requirement applies to: designated public sector organizations</p>	<p><b>Consult on:</b> Establishing, reviewing and updating the accessibility plan which outlines the organization’s strategy to prevent and remove barriers and meet its requirements under the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (including the Design of Public Spaces Standard).</p> <p><b>Consult:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People with disabilities.</li> <li>• Their accessibility advisory committee, if one has been established.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Recreational Trails [s. 80.8]</b></p> <hr/> <p>Consultation requirement applies to: all obligated organizations</p>	<p><b>Consult on:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Slope of trail.</li> <li>• Need for, and location of, ramps on the trail.</li> <li>• Need for, location and design of:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• rest areas;</li> <li>• passing areas;</li> <li>• viewing areas;</li> <li>• amenities on the trail; and</li> <li>• any other pertinent feature.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Consult:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The public and people with disabilities.</li> <li>• Municipalities must also consult with their municipal accessibility advisory committees, if one has been established.</li> </ul>

<sup>22</sup> Specifics regarding public review/input will depend on the process established by individual municipalities.



Item	Consultation Requirements
<p><b>Outdoor Play Spaces [s. 80.19]</b></p> <hr/> <p>Consultation requirement applies to: designated public sector organizations and large private and not-for-profit organizations with 50 or more employees</p>	<p><b>Consult on:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The needs of children and caregivers with various disabilities.</li> </ul> <p><b>Consult:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The public and people with disabilities.</li> <li>• Municipalities must also consult with their municipal accessibility advisory committees, if one has been established.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Exterior Paths of Travel – Rest Areas [s. 80.29]</b></p> <hr/> <p>Consultation requirement applies to: designated public sector organizations and large private and not-for-profit organizations with 50 or more employees</p>	<p><b>Consult on:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The design and placement of rest areas along the exterior path of travel.</li> </ul> <p><b>Consult:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The public and people with disabilities.</li> <li>• Municipalities must also consult with their municipal accessibility advisory committees, if one has been established.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Accessible On-Street Parking [s. 80.39]</b></p> <hr/> <p>Consultation requirement applies to: designated public sector organizations</p>	<p><b>Consult on:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The need, location and design of accessible on-street parking spaces.</li> </ul> <p><b>Consult:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The public and people with disabilities.</li> <li>• Municipalities must also consult with their municipal accessibility advisory committees, if one has been established.</li> </ul>

## Master Planning and Project Planning

### Master Planning

For a number of the spaces/facilities listed above, consultation can occur collectively at a master planning level. A Parks and Recreation Master Plan or a Trails Master Plan, for example, can include direction on design guidelines that address typical items covered by the Standard (e.g., rest areas, accessible on-street parking spaces, trail amenities). Similarly, local park development standards can formalize some aspects of accessible play space design in different types of parks (e.g., play spaces in neighbourhood-serving parks are to be at least 60% accessible; play spaces in community-serving parks are to be fully accessible). Consultation with the community occurs at various stages throughout the development of a master plan – typically at the outset to determine needs, and at subsequent points to review and confirm draft recommendations.

## Project Planning

Notwithstanding the existence of master plan policies/guidelines, consultation on site-specific plans may be required to determine, for example, **what** the 60% accessible components in a new or redeveloped neighbourhood park will comprise and the location of accessible on-street parking spaces to serve the park. Effectively, therefore, it will be a combination of across-the-board development standards and design specifications (if these are in place) and site-specific consultation with potential users, including people with disabilities and the general public. As with master plans, it is important to consult at key points in the process – at the outset to integrate community needs and interests in the project plan, and at appropriate points to verify the anticipated outcome of the development.

Consultations should be held as early as possible in the planning and design process to add value. That way, your organization can weigh all considerations before making decisions and finalizing design plans.

For communities without master plans, all accessibility aspects of individual projects will be addressed through site-specific consultations.

## Accessibility Advisory Committees

Communities that have established accessibility advisory committees will already have a process in place for consulting on implementing accessibility objectives in municipal projects and services (e.g., monthly committee meetings that are open to the public and during which proposed plans/designs are reviewed). For those communities that are not already addressing the requirements of the Design of Public Spaces Standard in project planning and design, the Standard will be incorporated in future work that goes before the committee. For communities without accessibility advisory committees, representative ad hoc committees could be established to oversee the implementation of the Standard, and associated community consultation, on a project-by-project basis. Alternately, accessibility advisory committees in nearby communities could be canvassed to request their availability to provide guidance on a project.

## How to Consult

The approach to community consultation and review varies from municipality to municipality, and there is no single correct way to consult. Most municipalities in Ontario have long-standing processes through which they solicit input from all sectors of their community on various areas of service. If not already addressing the requirements of the Design of Public Spaces Standard in developing and reviewing site plans/designs, municipalities will now need to consult with their community – including the public, people with disabilities and, as appropriate, their accessibility advisory committee – regarding its implementation.

The consultation requirement does not set out a particular process or way to consult. The requirements recognize that consultations can be conducted in a wide variety of ways depending on the organization. It also allows organizations to use consultation processes they may already have in place, and to combine consultations.

## Broad-based Consultation

If the municipality's overriding corporate policies and master plans have addressed relevant items related to accessibility (e.g. vision, definitions, design guidelines, etc.) consultation regarding these aspects of accessibility will occur in conjunction with community-wide consultation on their preparation. Similarly, a multi-year accessibility plan will include broad-based consultation as part of its development.

## Accessibility Advisory Committee Consultation

As noted above, the mandate of the accessibility advisory committee is to review relevant projects, plans and other service initiatives to ensure accessibility requirements are met, according to the multi-year plan and legislated standards according to their compliance timelines. Community consultation may occur as part of the committee process, and the way it is managed may vary from community to community and from project to project.

In the Town of Ajax, all regular Accessibility Advisory Committee meetings are open to the public to attend. Some meetings are advertised as formal public meetings, when required, to incorporate wider community input. Community-based public meetings may also be held by Town staff for specific projects for input on all aspects, including accessibility.

Not every project goes before the Town's Accessibility Advisory Committee. The Committee can request to review projects that align with its mandate. Smaller projects that do not incorporate major accessible playground equipment, however, are often left to in-house staff to ensure planning/design compliance (e.g., curb cuts, access, surfacing, shade areas, etc.).



### Consultation Tips:

The consultation process is very important and that is why it has been included in the Standard.

There may be challenges during the consultation process and here are some tips to help meet those challenges.

- Use the Ontario Municipal Social Services Guide to Accessible Public Engagement, which provides useful tips for things like using social media, feedback and meetings.
- Ensure that you have representation from people with disabilities or from their caregivers. This may be a challenge for smaller communities, so try collaborating with neighbouring municipalities on the consultation process to increase participation.
- Accessibility benefits everyone. Remember that making outdoor public spaces more accessible will enhance the recreation experience for many people in the community, regardless of ability. Keep everyone from children to older adults in mind.
- Keep caregivers in mind during the consultation. For example, think multi-generational use of play spaces.

## Project-specific Consultation

On a project or site-specific basis, the approach to consultation might vary by type or size of development. The following is an example of a range of consultation approaches of this type from the Town of Ajax:

1. **Consultation for major park/recreation facilities** (e.g., community centre that comprises a range of indoor and outdoor facilities/spaces, including a playground) takes several forms, including public meetings and a dedicated website to keep the community informed and up-to-date on the project's development. Input is gathered on potential facility components, important design features, and amenities within the context of the priorities identified in the Recreation, Parks and Culture Master Plan. The accessibility advisory committee is consulted regarding the design of the project at one of its regular monthly meetings that is open to the public. Notification of public meeting/consultation opportunities is communicated on the Town's website, in the local newspaper, and via news releases.
2. **Consultation for neighbourhood parks** (less than 1.5 hectares) generally comprises a relatively formal process:
  - 1-2 public meetings for community feedback.
  - Presentation to the accessibility advisory committee and community user groups.
  - Project consultant reviews public comments and consolidates feedback prior to final recommendation.
  - Staff report submitted to Standing Committee (General Government Committee) for approval.
  - Council endorses final recommendation.
3. **Consultation for small parkettes**, which may or may not include playground equipment, generally includes public notification through large sign boards on site that present the site plan, project description, timelines and project contact information.

## Engaging Users in Site Planning and Design

In planning the Memorial Park play space, the Municipality of Port Hope hosted a series of 'design charrettes' with small groups of children with varying abilities who would be the park's users when it was completed. The children developed a 'wish list' that described their ideal park, and assigned priorities to the resulting 'long list.' This information was provided to the designer/supplier who developed a number of options that attempted to incorporate as many of the desired features as possible as well as optimize access for abilities/needs that might not have been represented in the 'design group.' The designer worked with the children to arrive at a preferred option for installation.

This approach demonstrates active engagement of users in decisions related to the final product, and embraces a view of 'planning with' vs. 'planning for' the people who will use public spaces.

## Accessible Community Consultation

Community consultation programs must be designed and operated in a manner that facilitates everyone's participation. The Ontario Municipal Social Services Association, in partnership with the Government of Ontario, has produced two guides to accessible public engagement: **Guide to Accessible Public Engagement** and **Guide to Conducting Accessible Meetings**. These publications provide information on the following:

- Process-oriented considerations such as issue/goal identification; planning, implementing and tracking; embedding the process of accessible public engagement.
- Practical direction on conducting accessible meetings.
- Relevant legislation, checklists, using social media, meeting room set-ups, tips for speakers and resources

## Resources

Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (in partnership with the Government of Ontario). (2013). **Guide to Accessible Public Engagement** and **Guide to Conducting Accessible Meetings**. [www.omssa.com/accessible-community-engagement/omssa-guides/](http://www.omssa.com/accessible-community-engagement/omssa-guides/).

To request free electronic copies and accessible versions of the OMSSA guides, email OMSSA at [education@omssa.com](mailto:education@omssa.com).

Government of Ontario. **AccessON**.

For additional resources on other accessibility standards visit [www.ontario.ca/AccessON](http://www.ontario.ca/AccessON).

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When planning with users of accessible public spaces, it is important to remember that:

- Users include those who may not be present today, but will use the space in future and may have different needs than current users that also need to be considered.
- Immediate neighbours will be most affected by any potential changes to the site (e.g., new lighting, increased traffic and parking, especially if it is on-street, etc.) and so should be included in the process.

## Summary of Planning and Consultation Considerations

Table 5.2 summarizes the planning and consultation points discussed in Sections 4.0 and 5.0 of this guidebook, based on the presence of and absence of accessibility mechanisms in your municipality.

**Table 5.2: Summary of Planning and Consultation Considerations**

Do you have...	Yes	No
<b>an accessibility advisory committee?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• will incorporate Standard as part of established review process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• establish ad hoc committees to oversee projects on case-by-case basis</li> <li>• although not mandated for municipalities of less than 10,000 population, consider establishing standing accessibility advisory committee</li> </ul>
<b>a multi-year accessibility plan?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• if not already addressed, incorporate/exceed minimum requirements of the Standard in next review cycle</li> <li>• until next review cycle, review incorporation of Standard on case-by-case basis</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• if a large designated public sector organization, develop mandated plan by January 1, 2013</li> <li>• if a small designated public sector organization or large private or not-for-profit organization, develop mandated plan by January 1, 2014</li> <li>• although not mandated for small private and not-for-profit organizations, consider developing plan</li> </ul>
<b>local design guidelines that meet/exceed the Standard?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• if not already addressed, ensure guidelines are updated to meet the minimum requirements of the Standard</li> <li>• until updated, review incorporation of the Standard on case-by-case basis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• consider developing design guidelines that meet the minimum requirements of the Standard</li> </ul>



## List of Resources

**Accessible Playspaces for Everyone** website. [www.allabilitieswelcome.ca/Playspaces](http://www.allabilitieswelcome.ca/Playspaces).

All Abilities Welcome. **Play and Natural Learning Spaces Design, Construction and Maintenance Policy Template**. [www.allabilitieswelcome.ca/Playspaces/files/PlayspacePolicyTemplate.pdf](http://www.allabilitieswelcome.ca/Playspaces/files/PlayspacePolicyTemplate.pdf).

The Association of Registered Graphic Designers of Ontario (RGD Ontario). (2010). **Access Ability: A Practical Handbook on Accessible Graphic Design**. [www.rgd-accessibledesign.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/RGD\\_AccessAbility\\_Handbook.pdf](http://www.rgd-accessibledesign.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/RGD_AccessAbility_Handbook.pdf).

Aviva Insurance. **Aviva Community Fund**. [www.avivacommunityfund.org/files/AvivaCommunityFund\\_2013.pdf](http://www.avivacommunityfund.org/files/AvivaCommunityFund_2013.pdf).

**Canadian Playground Safety Institute**. [www.cpsionline.ca/index.php?action=cms.trainCpsiCourseDesc](http://www.cpsionline.ca/index.php?action=cms.trainCpsiCourseDesc).

Canadian Standards Association. **Children's Playspaces and Equipment Standard (CAN/CSA Z164-07). Annex H: Children's playspaces and equipment that are accessible to persons with disabilities** (2007). [www.allabilitieswelcome.ca/Playspaces/files/Annex\\_H\\_Guidebook.pdf](http://www.allabilitieswelcome.ca/Playspaces/files/Annex_H_Guidebook.pdf).

City of Coquitlam, British Columbia. **Corporate Accessible Play Spaces Policy and Report to Council**. [www.prontario.org/index.php?ci\\_id=9043](http://www.prontario.org/index.php?ci_id=9043).

City of Edmonton. **Checklist for Accessibility and Universal Design in Architecture**. [www.edmonton.ca/for\\_residents/AccessibilityChecklist2008.pdf](http://www.edmonton.ca/for_residents/AccessibilityChecklist2008.pdf).

**City of London Accessibility Plan** (2011). [www.london.ca/city-hall/accessibility/Pages/Accessibility-at-the-City-of-London.aspx](http://www.london.ca/city-hall/accessibility/Pages/Accessibility-at-the-City-of-London.aspx).

**City of London 2007 Facility Accessibility Design Standards**. [www.london.ca/city-hall/accessibility/Pages/Facilities-Accessibility-Design-Standards.aspx](http://www.london.ca/city-hall/accessibility/Pages/Facilities-Accessibility-Design-Standards.aspx).

City of Toronto. (2004). **Accessibility Design Guidelines, Part 1: Exterior Areas**. [www1.toronto.ca/static\\_files/equity\\_diversity\\_and\\_human\\_rights\\_office/pdf/accessibility\\_design\\_guidelines.pdf](http://www1.toronto.ca/static_files/equity_diversity_and_human_rights_office/pdf/accessibility_design_guidelines.pdf).

Employment and Social Development Canada. **Enabling Accessibility Fund**. [www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/disability/eaf/](http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/disability/eaf/).

Government of Ontario. **AccessON**. [www.ontario.ca/AccessON](http://www.ontario.ca/AccessON).

Government of Ontario. **Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation**. [www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regs/english/elaws\\_regs\\_110191\\_e.htm](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regs/english/elaws_regs_110191_e.htm).

Hamilton, E.J., Burgess, F.M., Hepfer, P.C. (2002). **Beach Access Study Results: Surfaces**. National Centre on Accessibility Indiana University Study #00-4088. [https://scholarworks.iu.edu/dspace/bitstream/handle/2022/3101/Beach\\_Study\\_Final\\_Report.pdf](https://scholarworks.iu.edu/dspace/bitstream/handle/2022/3101/Beach_Study_Final_Report.pdf) or [www.indiana.edu/~nca/beaches/beachsurf.shtml](http://www.indiana.edu/~nca/beaches/beachsurf.shtml).

Hydro One. **Power Play Program**. [www.hydroone.com/OurCommitment/Community/Pages/powerplay.aspx](http://www.hydroone.com/OurCommitment/Community/Pages/powerplay.aspx).

IPA Canada. (2009). **Play and Natural Learning Spaces Design, Construction and Maintenance Policy Template**. [www.allabilitieswelcome.ca/Playspaces/files/PlayspacePolicyTemplate.pdf](http://www.allabilitieswelcome.ca/Playspaces/files/PlayspacePolicyTemplate.pdf).

Kraft Canada. **Kraft Celebration Tour**. [www.kraftcelebrationtour.ca/en](http://www.kraftcelebrationtour.ca/en).

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