

THE ARCHITECT
BUILDERS COLLABORATIVE

fighting climate change
with great green design



THE ARCHITECT BUILDERS COLLABORATIVE'S



GUIDE TO MODERN ACCESSIBLE WORKPLACES

RENOVATIONS THAT PAY FOR THEMSELVES



IS THIS GUIDE FOR YOU?

Daniel Hall, O.A.A., Accessibility Architect, wrote this guide for our Clients like you who:

- Need to be sure that your workplace is AODA compliant and truly accessible.
- Want to identify the hidden barriers to accessibility in your workplace and how to remove them
- Have a valuable employee with a disability that you need to accommodate or want to be able to hire great employees who might be disabled.
- Need a plan to improve accessibility with costs and timelines
- Don't know how to pay for make the necessary changes
- Want to unlock the 'Hidden' 10% -15% of the space you're currently paying for but is not being well used.

If you share any of these concerns, then read on. Our "Green Guide to making your workplace accessible and finding the 'hidden' 15% more space you're already paying for" will help you to see the path to a truly accessible workplace.

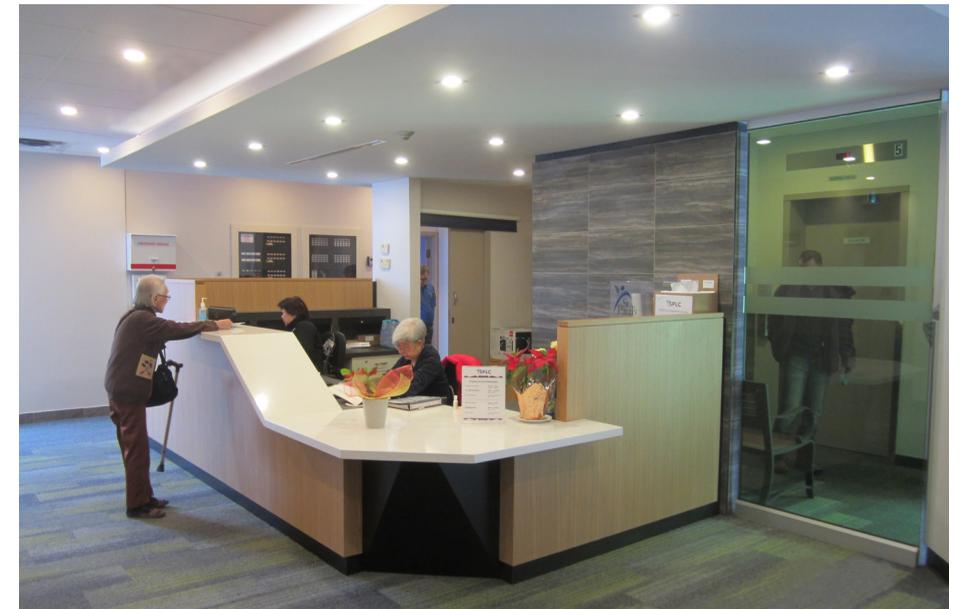
CAN WE AFFORD TO MAKE OUR SPACE ACCESSIBLE?

We often hear from Clients that want to do the right thing and make sure that their workplace is fully accessible both to visitors and their own employees, but just can't afford to. If you're feeling this way, don't worry - you're not alone. Budgets are lean all over and funding in the non-profit sector is even tighter than usual. Accessibility can seem like one more strain on your finances.



Senior Persons Living
Connected Lobby (SPLC) - Before

TABC



Senior Persons Living Connected Lobby - After

TABC



A ROADMAP TO FOLLOW

Fortunately, you probably have a 'hidden asset' in under-used or poorly laid out space that you're already paying rent for. Most workplaces we see have at least 10%-15% of under-utilized space that can be tapped to offset the costs of a renovation. When you're done, your workplace will be both accessible and more effective for your staff. You'll have room to grow or just give key staff the space they need to do their jobs efficiently.



You may be confused about what the AODA requires of your organisation; unsure of what accommodations you should make for an employee with a disability; or just don't know where to start. Will making an accessible workplace will be too expensive, or disruptive to your staff? But you know that you need to do something. You need to have a solid plan to work with. A roadmap towards a truly accessible workplace - with a realistic budget and schedule.

STEP 1. IDENTIFY THE BARRIERS TO ACCESSIBILITY THAT EXIST IN YOUR SPACE TODAY

Accessibility is about more than wheelchairs, ramps, and elevators. Those are all important, of course, but barriers exist in subtler ways too. Poorly designed spaces can also be difficult for anyone pushing a stroller, using a walker, or even a cane. Your Architect can determine if your space complies with the requirements of the Ontario Building Code, and the AODA.

So let's take a close look around you. Start outside - how you get to the front door. Are there steps to climb? Sharp changes in level? Doors that are hard to open? Dark shadows that hide tripping hazards?



LULA's help with large changes in levels

lula-elevators.com



Full height buttons are easier to use

TABC

Now for the main entrance. Does the door have a power door operator? If so, are the buttons easy to reach (1100mm high)? We recommend using the 900mm tall strips instead of the older 150mm square or smaller buttons as they can be used by more people.



SPOT THE BARRIERS



A subtle ramp

TABC

Once you're inside, are stairs the only way to reach some areas? How wide are the doorways (measure the clear width when open)? Is there room to turn around in a wheelchair? What about parking a stroller or walker if your Visitors are likely to need one?

If there's a reception desk or information counter, how high is it? Is there room to pull up in a wheelchair?

Now for the washrooms. Think about wheelchair access, door locks, grab bars, sink height, mirror angles, panic buttons to call for help, adult change tables, etc.



A specially designed 'light scoop' brings sunlight into an otherwise dark corner.

TABC

What about barriers for the visually impaired, such as stair treads that are hard to see, bright glare from windows, poor lighting at reception desks, etc?

How about the acoustics in your space? Can you hear clearly at normal speech levels? Is there a lot of echo and bounce in the sound? Ever been out to dinner in a busy restaurant that's so loud you can't hear the people at your own table? That's how someone with hearing loss might feel in your lobby, or trying to understand your receptionist.

MAKING ACCOMMODATIONS

If some of your employees have disabilities, ask them what kind of accommodations will help make their work easier. The answers might surprise you. In our case, a powered adjustable desk not only allows Greg, one of our excellent Architectural Technologists to roll up in his wheelchair, but he finds that the ability to make small adjustments in height throughout the

day staves off fatigue and even reduces the risk of pressure sores - an all too common affliction for those confined to wheelchairs. Someone with limited manual dexterity may not be able to use your office phones. The solution may be as simple as auto-forwarding calls to their cell phone that is already set-up for easy answering. The needs and solutions will be unique to your situation.



Adjustable Desk

source.ca

STEP 2. DISCOVER YOUR 'HIDDEN ASSETS'

Every time we renovate a workplace or office we have discovered poorly designed or wasted spaces that can be put back to work for you, often increasing the capacity of the space by 10% -15% . Look around you. Take a long, close look at how people use the space they have now. In particular, learn to spot:



jan-pro.com

- Rooms that are often empty
- Spaces could be used for more than one purpose
- Long empty corridors and halls
- Storage rooms full of things you seldom use
- Half-empty server rooms designed for a 20th Century machines
- Last Century desks full of things that you're not actively using
- Opportunities for 'hotelling' or 'hot-desks' for staff who frequently need to work elsewhere?

All of these spaces are hidden in plain sight. Make a list or diagram of what you found. This is the grist for the Designer's mill. These spaces are the key to make major improvements in how your space flows and functions while also finding room for the accessibility upgrades that you need. This is like getting FREE SPACE to:

- Make room for mobility devices, ramps, and even an elevator
- Hire more staff
- Create more efficient flow and movement in your space
- Better connect management and staff
- Put in a foosball table (an accessible one, of course)

STEP 3. SET YOUR SPECIFIC 'ACCESSIBILITY GOALS'

Every organization is unique and will have different needs when it comes to accessibility. It helps to set your goals down on paper to better understand the problem that your design is to solve.



There are multiple different forms of accessibility.

brampton.ca

- Determine if you have legal obligations under AODA, OBC
- Identify any funding-specific obligations
 - ◇ Many government grants come with requirements or preferential treatment for projects that enhance accessibility
- Be clear about who you serve? Who comes to your space?
 - ◇ A seniors Centre needs to plan for room for mobility devices, visual impairment, acoustics, clear wayfinding
 - ◇ A daycare needs room for strollers, and parents in wheelchairs
- What specific needs to your present or future disabled employees have?
 - ◇ Room for a wheelchair or walker?
 - ◇ Adjustable desks and seating?
 - ◇ Additional lighting?

Now, make a list and divide your goals into two groups:

- 'Must-Haves' and
- 'Nice-to-Haves'

Be brutally honest with yourself at this stage. Remember, you don't have to do everything - just choose what's most important for your organization, now. As the saying goes: "If you have an hour to save the world, spend 55 minutes understanding the problem".



STEP 4. CONCEPTUAL DESIGN TO FIND THE BEST SOLUTION

Okay, full disclosure - this is the part where you're probably going to need help from a good Architect or Interior Designer who is experienced designing for accessibility.

Start with an accurate plan of your existing space, and a thorough understanding of the existing barrier to accessibility that you developed in Step 1. The 'Hidden Spaces' from Step 2 are your raw material from which we'll shape your new space.



There will typically be 2 or 3 good options to improve on the Accessibility and unlock the Hidden Spaces. Explore each with the aid of some sketches and study models.

At this stage, the goal is not to make a perfect design, but simply to identify in broad strokes the Conceptual Design that best solves the problems you have identified in Step 3. Test each option against your Must-Have / Nice-to-Have list from Step 3.

Pick the option that best meets your own specific Accessibility Goals.

STEP 5. BUILD A BUDGET AND SCHEDULE TO ACHIEVE YOUR ACCESSIBILITY GOALS

Now you're ready to determine the answer to your big questions:

- How much will this cost?
- How long will it take?

To answer these questions, you'll need:

1. Conceptual Design drawings showing the full extent of the work
2. Outline Scope of Work document that spells out the key elements so nothing overlooked
3. A Class 'D' or 'Indicative' estimate of the cost of construction
 - a. This kind of estimate is based on approximate quantities and costs from previous similar projects and is considered to be accurate within 20%-30%
4. A project schedule that includes appropriate times for:
 - a. Preparing Design Drawings
 - b. Obtaining required Permits and other approvals
 - c. Choosing a Builder
 - d. Construction WorkConsider phasing and occupied spaces
 - e. Special furniture and fixture installation
 - f. Close-out and post-occupancy review

You may wish to compare 2 equally good solutions in order to decide which one provides the best value.

Now you've got your plan in place, you're ready to have the project approved and get started on implementation.....



STEP 6. IMPLEMENT YOUR PLAN TO CREATE A TRULY ACCESSIBLE 21ST CENTURY WORKPLACE

A. HIRE AN ARCHITECT

An experienced Architect will make it easy for you to plan your accessible workplace. With their guidance, you'll avoid expensive mistakes and benefit from careful design and unbiased advice about the construction process.

When selecting an Architect, consider:

- Their experience with accessible design
- References from previous Clients
- Ability to complete a project of your scale in a timely fashion
- How well they can collaborate with the Builder and prevent conflict

Remember, Quality Based Selection [QBS] is more important than the lowest fee. AN experienced Architect will save you money, and a cheap one will end up costing you more in construction and operating costs.

Architectural fees will range from 5% - 25% of the construction cost based on the size and complexity of the project and the scope of services required.

B. DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION DRAWINGS

Starting from the approved Conceptual Design, we develop the details and fill in the missing parts. Design is an iterative process. To arrive at the best solution, you'll need 2 or 3 rounds of:

Design - Review & Revise - Repeat

Time invested to get it right at this stage will save many times the cost down the road. Models are easy to change. Walls, floors, & elevators: not so much. You'll see precise drawings, renderings, and full 3-D virtual models of the space to help you visualize how each design will look, feel, and work. Using industry-leading BIM software such as Archicad has the added benefit of being precise with key dimensions to help you avoid disappointments later during construction.

C. PERMITS & APPROVALS

Most, but not all renovations will require some form of approvals or permits. Building Permits are necessary for all but minor cosmetic changes to a building, and Landlords will often have additional requirements before approving any changes.

Your Architect will guide you through this process and prepare any drawings you will need. The Architect coordinates the work of the Engineers who design specific components such as sprinklers, alarms, etc to make sure that nothing is overlooked.

D. HIRE A BUILDER

The two most common approaches to hiring a Builder are a competitive bidding process for a fixed price, and a construction management or cost-plus model. The specifics of your situation will determine which is best for your needs.

Fixed Fee Competitive Bidding

- Suits larger projects where the scope is clearly defined
- May be a requirement of some Funders
- Transfers risk to the Builder
- Changes can be expensive

Construction Management

- Generally best for renovations, with unknown site conditions
- Easier to plan around occupied spaces
- Risk is borne by the Owner
- Requires trust and open communication
- Regular budget & schedule updates from the Construction Manager

E. FINALIZE THE COST AND SCHEDULE

Before the dust starts to fly, there are a lot of details to take care of. Your Architect will help keep track of things such as:

- Obtaining a Designated Substance Survey
- Understanding the roles and responsibilities of the Owner, Builder, & Consultants
- Finalizing the project budget and schedule
- Identifying the main areas of risk
- Planning for phased work & maintaining use of the space



F. CONSTRUCTION WORK

Once the construction work begins, you'll want to keep track of the progress through regular project team meetings with you, the Builder, and your Architect. Some of the Architect's other services during construction include:

- Regular site reviews & reports for quality assurance
- Certifying monthly progress draws from the Builder

G. CLOSE-OUT & FOLLOW-UP

- Importance of Proper Close-out procedures
- Documentation
- Service & maintenance
- Commissioning & Occupancy
- Post-Occupancy review
- Warranty Period





**Get started by booking you FREE 30 minute
consultation with Accessibility Architect,
Daniel Hall, O.A.A.**

- Online here ,
- email daniel@tabc.ca with the subject “Book my Free Consultation”, or
- Phone 416.504.0405

During the call, we’ll ask you some more questions to get a better understanding of your needs and determine if we can help you achieve them. If so, we’ll discuss how we use our Accessibility & Hidden Asset Assessment tool to help our Clients identify their specific Accessibility Goals and a roadmap to implementing them.

Soon you’ll be enjoying a 21st Century Workplace

When you’re done, you’ll enjoy

- Anyone will be able to visit your space and access your services with ease and dignity
 - » Fully AODA compliant
- A great employee who became disabled can continue to work for you
 - » Saves cost of new staff
 - » Avoids costs of wrongful dismissal / human rights claims
- Attract great, dedicated staff who might have a disability
- Congratulations, because you’ve done the right thing!
 - » And you might even get a raise from your Board of Directors

