

project design and function fit into local zoning goals, land development plans, the physical aspects of the site itself, the neighborhood, occasionally the region, and finally the values and needs of the community itself. In some respects it could be argued that these are listed in order of increasing difficulty to assess and to accommodate.

What are the program requirements?

The process of collecting site information is much the same for every project, but the analysis is always performed in the context of a proposed use or project. It is necessary to have an understanding of the proposed project to conduct the site analysis. In most cases the designer must rely on the client and experience to form a working understanding of the proposed project. Projects with a poorly defined program should be addressed cautiously by the professional. Experience suggests that such projects often have a high risk of failure associated with them; disappointed clients and unpaid invoices seem to accompany poorly defined or considered projects. Occasionally designers are asked to evaluate a site for its possible uses, in which case a series of analyses is done presuming different uses and parameters, but in most instances the analysis is conducted with an end use in mind. The analysis must consider the fundamental elements of a given project such as siting of proposed buildings, access to and from the site, lot layout, parking requirements, vehicular and pedestrian circulation, and a general strategy for storm water management. Physical development constraints such as slopes, wetlands, and floodplains must be accounted for in a preliminary fashion. Site analysts should extend their efforts to consider the off-site issues as well. These concerns may include traffic issues, local flood or storm water concerns, or infrastructure issues.

Permitting and administrative requirements are particularly important in contemporary site development. Knowing which permits are necessary and the expected lead time required to obtain them is often a critical element in a project. The professional should attempt to assess the desirability of the project to local government and people as well.

ADA and pedestrian access

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) became law in the United States in 1990. Under the act a person with a disability is entitled to the same access and accommodations as the public in general. As a result, building and site owners are required to remove any barrier wherever such an accommodation is considered “readily achievable.” The readily achievable test can be an ambiguous one for existing buildings, but for new construction it is clear, and all public-accessible designs must incorporate ADA principles and requirements. To enable compliance with the act, in 1998 the *Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines for Buildings and Facilities* (ADAAG) were developed and distributed by the Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board. More can be read about ADAAG on their Web site