



Town of Chatham, Massachusetts

PART A – Executive Summary

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Introduction

The Institute for Human Centered Design (IHCD) has prepared this report on behalf of the Town of Chatham as part of the Town’s on-going effort to assess the current level of Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance in programs, services and activities and Town-owned facilities. In preparing for this report, IHCD teams surveyed the Town’s portfolio of facilities and properties that were included in the Request for Proposal between March 23, 2021 and May 17, 2021.

The survey set includes ten (10) public buildings, (5) semi-public buildings, six (6) parks, beaches and harbors, and three (3) other locations. The accessibility survey for the public and semi-public buildings includes all the spaces where the Town offers programs, services and activities to members of the public. The accessibility survey for the outdoor areas including the parks, beaches and harbors encompassed elements such as accessible routes, walking surfaces, slopes, picnic tables, recreational areas and accessible parking.

IHCD has submitted separate reports for each facility that was surveyed. To assist in prioritizing accessibility improvements to ensure compliance with Title II of the ADA, each of the facility reports includes an overview that identifies the most substantial accessibility issues and order-of-magnitude cost estimates for corrective action. Additionally, a detailed catalog that supplements the ADA Self-Evaluation narrative is also included. The catalog provides element-by-element photos of compliance issues, location and measurements – when applicable – at each assessed facility accompanied by recommendations and cost estimates for addressing each accessibility issue.

In addition, a spreadsheet of priorities for corrective action organized by type of building or location and including order-of-magnitude costs was provided to the Town. When the Town presents findings and recommendations to the community and receives feedback, some recommendations may need cost adjustment. These spreadsheets are a capital planning and budgeting tool – the “ADA Transition Plan” – and are intended as a long-term resource to update as work is completed. The Town should make a good faith effort to complete the work in a reasonable time (IHCD recommends a three (3) to five (5) year period). The ADA regulations do not set out precise timeframes to complete the work; IHCD bases the timeframes on conversations with the Department of Justice (DOJ) and their Project Civic Access settlement agreements with municipalities.

Together, the ADA Self-Evaluation and ADA Transition Plan will enable the Town to make substantial progress in meeting its ADA responsibilities. The recommendations for corrective action that apply to policies and procedures of the ADA Self-Evaluation are not included in the ADA Transition Plan since the Transition Plan spreadsheet is limited to capital accessibility issues. Policy and procedure recommendations, covered in detail in the provided *Part B – Evaluation of Non-discriminatory Policies & Practices in Programs, Services & Activities report*, are a blueprint for meeting compliance responsibilities other than capital expenses. The ADA administrative requirements help ensure that the needs of people with disabilities are addressed in all services, programs and activities that the Town offers.

Most of the Town-owned facilities that have been recently altered or renovated are substantially accessible and meet most architectural requirements. Continued facility alterations, and/or renovations will significantly reduce barriers and help realize the Town's commitment to inclusion and equal rights. In the meantime, the greatest problems posed by existing barriers can be ameliorated by establishing policies and procedures to accommodate members of the community with disabilities. It is worth noting that the Town has taken several significant steps in this direction:

- The Town of Chatham has hired a consultant (IHCD) to undertake its ADA self-evaluation (as the basis for the Town's Transition Plan).
- The Town of Chatham has an ADA Coordinator in place.

IHCD's review and recommendations of Town-owned facilities is based on compliance with the 2010 ADA Standards if an element or elements are not compliant with the 1991 ADA Standards and/or 521 CMR of the Massachusetts Architectural Access Board (MAAB). Best practice and inclusive design recommendations are also provided for each property. Inclusive design recommendations include elements that are *not* required in the accessibility standards, but may create enhanced experiences for all users.

Many key facilities are generally usable by people with disabilities but are not in full compliance with current accessibility requirements. The Town Hall, for instance, provides access to many programs and can be accessed by most people because the building has accessible routes through the interior of the building. Yet accessibility issues include lack of edge protection and a running slope that is greater than the maximum allowed at the ramp leading to the main entrance and women's and men's toilet rooms have entry door thresholds that are higher than the maximum allowed. In addition, service counters in the building lack a

compliant 36-inch high max. portion, a key component to access some of the services provided by the Town. The Council on Aging is another example of a facility that provides access to most programs. However, there is door hardware that requires tight grasping, pinching, or twisting of the wrist, there is a lack of accessible sinks (with knee and toe clearance) and lack of accessible work surfaces (knee clearance) in the computer room and the library. At the Fire and Rescue Department, there is lack of a sign with the term “AREA OF REFUGE” and the International Symbol of Accessibility (ISA) at the door outside egress stair B21, and the area of refuge lacks posted instructions and a two-way communication system.

Facilities that are more difficult to access by people with disabilities include the Eldredge Public Library. While the library has an interior elevator that provides vertical access to many areas, there is no accessible route to a stage in Forgeron Hall, and there is no accessible route to the genealogy area which can only be accessed by stairs. The Railroad Museum lacks an accessible toilet room.

The Town may comply with the requirements of Title II of the ADA through means such as reassignment of programs or services to accessible buildings or delivery of services at alternate accessible sites. The Town may also comply with the requirements by renovation or alteration of existing facilities and/or construction of new facilities, or any other methods that result in making the Town’s services, programs or activities readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities. Note that a public entity is not required to make structural changes in existing facilities where other methods are effective in achieving compliance with its Title II obligations.

In choosing among available methods for meeting the requirements of the ADA, the Town of Chatham shall give priority to those methods that offer services, programs, and activities to qualified individuals with disabilities in the most integrated setting appropriate.

In order to comply with the program accessibility obligations, the Town of Chatham should consider:

1. Relocation of its programs, services and activities within a current facility.

Often the simplest solution is for the Town to use what it already has in place. IHCD strongly recommends the relocation of programs, services and activities to accessible locations within current facilities when possible.

2. Relocation of its programs, services and activities to another facility.

When it is not possible to relocate them within the current facility, program, services, and activities should be relocated to an accessible facility.

3. Renovation/alteration of Town facilities to ensure access to programs, services and activities.

The Town may consider the renovation of its facilities or the provision of new accessible facilities to ensure that the programs, services and activities are offered in the most integrated seating possible.

Note that any corrective actions needed to ensure program accessibility must comply with the requirements of the 2010 ADA Standards and/or 521 CMR.

The Town has an obligation to achieve program accessibility under the ADA regulations. There are exceptions for alterations to qualified historic buildings and facilities under the ADA Standards which may apply to the Railroad Museum. Those exceptions include accessible routes, entrances and toilet facilities. If alterations to a qualified historic building or facility to achieve program accessibility would threaten or destroy the historic significance of the building or facility, fundamentally alter the program, or result in undue financial or administrative burdens, the ADA regulations allow alternative methods to be used to achieve program accessibility. Alternative methods include using audio-visual materials to depict portions of the museum that cannot otherwise be made accessible.

Furthermore, when completing alterations/renovations, keep in mind that an alteration that decreases the accessibility of a building below the requirements for new construction at the time of the alteration is prohibited.

To determine which buildings must be made accessible, the Town should consider:

- How to provide the program in the most integrated setting appropriate;
- The locations where the activities are offered;
- Which facilities are accessible and to what extent.

Key Recommendations – Public and Semi-Public Buildings

- Ensure there is an accessible route from all arrival points to those areas in the building where public programs, services and activities are provided. When that is not possible, such as with the lack of an accessible route to the genealogy area at the Eldredge Library, in order to provide program access, the Town must ensure that library staff retrieves materials from the genealogy room upon request and duplicates card catalogs or other methods of researching what is in the genealogy room at an accessible location in the library.
- If parking is provided, ensure fully accessible parking spaces are provided. There are issues with accessible parking at multiple locations such as lack of or noncompliant accessible parking spaces, access aisles and signs. For example, the Doc Keene Scout Hall lacks an accessible parking space near the accessible entrance and the Transfer Station lacks compliant parking identification signs,
- Ensure that fully accessible toilet rooms are provided in the building, such as at the Railroad Museum. Where it is technically infeasible to provide accessible multi-user toilet rooms, provide an accessible single-user toilet room in the same area as the existing multi-user toilet rooms.
- Ensure that where programs, services or activities are offered there is a sufficient number of accessible features (accessible counters, accessible work surfaces, etc.). For example, there is lack of accessible work surfaces at the Town Hall, the Council on Aging, the Community Center, the DPW, the Eldredge Public Library, and at the Doc Keene Scout Hall.
- If audible communication is integral to the use of the space, provide a compliant assistive listening system. This should be a priority at the Chatham Fire and Rescue Department's training room.
- Ensure that those features of facilities and equipment that are required to be readily accessible to and usable by persons with disabilities are maintained in operable working condition (e.g., elevators or automatic door openers).

Key Recommendations for Parks, Beaches and Harbors:

- Ensure there is an accessible route to all elements in the park/outdoor space (picnic areas, toilet facilities, mean high tide level at ocean beaches, etc.). For example, there is

lack of an accessible route to the bandstand at Kate Gould Park and Toilet Room, Oyster Pond Beach lacks an accessible route to the mean high tide level at the beach (beach mat) and lacks a compliant accessible route around the toilet rooms, and the Stage Harbor Harbormaster's Office has ramp handrails that do not extend 12" past top and bottom of the ramp and has ramp surfaces with excessive running slopes.

- Ensure that at least 5% but no less than one of amenities such as picnic tables are accessible and that accessible picnic tables are located on an accessible route.

Key Recommendations Other Locations:

- Provide a fully accessible toilet at the Airport.
- Provide an accessible portable toilet at Seaside Links Golf Course.
- Provide an accessible service counter at the Seaside Links Golf Course and at the Airport lobby.
- Ensure that exterior accessible routes are maintained in operable working condition, prevent accumulation of water, and are free of level changes greater than ¼ inch.
- Ensure the cross slope of exterior accessible routes does not exceed 1:50 (2.00%).
- Mount visual signs so that the baseline of the lowest character is 40" min. above the ground or finished floor. (Note, parking identification signs should be 60" min. above the ground measured to the bottom of the sign and, 96" max. above the ground measured to the top of the sign.) Add the designation "Van Accessible" to van accessible parking spaces.
- Provide marked access aisles at the accessible parking spaces at the Airport.

