

Getting the City fit for all: IMPLEMENTING AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT STANDARDS

Have you noticed wider doors, lower curbs, wheelchair ramps and other modifications for individuals with disabilities in businesses and public areas? If you haven't paid much attention before, soon you will see modifications such as these everywhere.

The ADA is a Federal civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities and opens doors for full participation in all aspects of everyday life. It applies to both the built environment and to policies and procedures that affect how a business provides goods and services to its customers.

Businesses covered by the ADA are required to make "reasonable modifications" to their usual ways of doing things when servicing people with disabilities. Accessibility is not only for individuals with mobility disabilities, but also for needs related to speech, cognitive, vision and hearing disabilities.

It also requires that existing buildings, newly built or altered facilities are constructed to be accessible to individuals with disabilities.

"Grandfather Provisions" do not exempt businesses from their obligations under the ADA. Commercial facilities, such as office buildings, factories, warehouses, or other facilities that do not provide goods or services directly to the public are only subject to the ADA's requirements for new construction and alterations.

The City of Hinesville is developing a "Transition Plan" for the necessary steps to bring older city-owned properties into compliance under Title II ADA requirements.

More than 50 million Americans – 18% of our population have disabilities, and each is a potential customer. People with disabilities are living more independently and participating more actively in their communities.

They and their families want to patronize businesses that welcome customers with disabilities. Studies show that once people with disabilities find a business where they can shop or get services in an accessible manner, they become repeat customers. People with disabilities have too often been excluded from everyday activities.

What does ADA cover?

Businesses that provide goods or services to the public are called "public accommodations" in the ADA. It establishes requirements for 12 categories of public accommodations. This includes nearly all types of businesses that serve the public, regardless of the size of the business or the age of their buildings. They are:

1. Places of lodging: *inns, hotels, motels etc.*
2. Establishments serving food/drink: *restaurants and bars etc.*
3. Places of exhibition/entertainment: *theaters, concert halls etc.*
4. Places of public gathering: *auditoriums, convention centers etc.*
5. Sales or rental establishments: *grocery stores, shopping ctr. etc.*
6. Service establishments: *banks, barber/beauty shops, professional offices, gas stations, health care providers, hospitals etc.*
7. Public transportation terminals: *depots/stations (not air transp.)*
8. Places of public display or collection: *museums, libraries etc.*
9. Places of recreation: *parks, zoos, amusements parks etc.*
10. Places of education: *nursery schools, elementary, secondary, undergraduate, or postgraduate private schools etc.*
11. Social service center establishments: *day care centers, senior centers. etc.*
12. Places of exercise or recreation: *gyms, health spas, bowling alleys, golf courses etc.*

