



**City of Seattle**  
**Department of Finance and Administrative Services**  
**ADA Compliance Team**  
700 Fifth Ave., Suite 4112, PO Box 94687  
Seattle, WA 98124-4687

## **ACT (ADA Compliance Team) Early Design Guidance**

**The purpose of this document is to highlight some elements of the Americans with Disabilities Act and to explain our process in reviewing project documents. This document is not intended to relieve design professionals or departments of the obligation to determine and apply all relevant ADA and other code provisions to the project.**

### **Overview:**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a civil rights law that requires communities to provide equal access to programs and services to all of their community members. Title II of the ADA addresses the requirement for public entities to provide equal access to their services. Per Title II – Public Services:

#### **202 Discrimination**

Subject to the provisions of this title, no qualified individual with a disability shall, by reason of such disability, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of the services, programs, or activities of a public entity, or be subjected to discrimination by any such entity.

This means the City of Seattle is required by federal law to provide readily accessible facilities per title 28 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Section 35.151 which states:

#### **35.151 New Construction and Alterations**

##### **(a) Design and construction.**

- (1) Each facility or part of a facility constructed by, on behalf of, or for the use of a public entity shall be designed and constructed in such manner that the facility or part of the facility is readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities, if the construction was commenced after January 26, 1992.

**2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design** – The 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design became effective March 15, 2012, and govern new construction and alterations undertaken by state and local governments built after that date.

On May 11, 2012, the Mayor of the City of Seattle issued Executive Order 01-2012, which provides guidance for building codes and standards in the design and construction of City facilities. That Order includes the following language: "... where there is an inconsistency between the Washington State Building Code, the Seattle Building Code, the Seattle Residential Code, the Seattle Existing Building Code and the ADA, the City should abide by the most stringent requirements;"

### **Reference Documents for City of Seattle ADA Facility Design and Construction\*:**

- 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design
- 2012 International Building Code (IBC) with the Washington State Amendments
- ICC/ANSI A117.1-2009
- 2012 Seattle Building Code
- Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 51-50
- Besides these documents, also refer to the Guidance on the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design.

\*When a conflict exists between the various codes, choose the most stringent solution.



### **Creating design and construction documents that comply with ADA**

**Accessible Route** – This will be your starting point and keep your focus on the end goal: accessibility throughout the building(s) and site.

- For easy review, graphically show the accessible route on the drawings. This provides clarity of design intent and documentation.
- Pay attention to all elements and rooms along the accessible route to ensure they also meet ADA requirements.
- For parks, all park elements/design features must be on an accessible route.
- The accessible route will include but not be limited to parking, access to and from transit, thresholds, curb cuts, ramps, walking surfaces, doors, hardware, clearances, signage, elevators, platform lifts, etc.

The following list identifies items which will generally be scrutinized in our review of every project, and which require attention in the design process to ensure a fully accessible new or altered building or site. This is not intended to be a comprehensive list as each project can contain elements not represented here or unique circumstances which must be considered.

#### **1. Slopes at Walkways and Accessible Routes<sup>1</sup>:**

- The maximum cross slope is 1:48 (2%) or ¼" per foot.
- Walkways can have a maximum slope of 1:20 (5%). Provide a landing for every 30" of rise.
- Clear width shall be 36" minimum, 44" (per WAC) minimum for exterior walkways

#### **2. Doors and gates:**

- Minimum clear width when the door is open 90° is 32".
- Pay special attention to required maneuvering clearances based on approach and presence of a closer or not and provide required clearance dimensions.
- Level floor is required on both sides of the door.
- Thresholds must be ½" maximum except for minor exceptions for altered doorways.
- Provide lever hardware always.
- Specify closers that can achieve the required low 5 lb. maximum opening force for interior doors (10 lbs. for exterior doors per WAC).

#### **3. Ramps:**

- Ramps slope from greater than 1:20 (5%) to 1:12 (8.33%) max and the maximum cross slope is 1:48 (2%).
- The maximum allowable rise is 30" for every 30'-0" of length.
- 60" long landings are required at the top and the bottom of ramps and intermediate landings are required each time the maximum ramp rise is reached.
- When the rise is greater than 6" handrails are required.
- Edge protection is always required on both sides of a ramp.

#### **4. Curb Ramps:**

- There are very specific criteria for curb ramps. Refer to section 406 in the 2010 ADA Standards and ANSI ICCA117.1-2009 and coordinate with SDOT standards to ensure an accessible solution is achieved.

#### **5. Elevators and Platform Lifts:**

- Important to note – the elevator exception does not apply to City facilities.
- Elevators – pay attention to size, landings, location of controls and signals.
- Platform lifts – pay attention to landings, clearances, controls and orientation. Note, platform lifts are only allowed under 10 specific instances in new construction.

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<sup>1</sup> Design should consider issues related to construction tolerances in meeting the slope and clear width standards.



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**6. Parking:**

- Provide the right number of spaces and access aisles including correct car/van distribution.
- Stalls and access aisles must be level with a maximum cross slope of 1:48 (2%).
- Access aisles at stalls must connect to an accessible route.
- Make sure signs are provided at ADA stalls and that the signs meet required dimensions.

**7. Plumbing Elements and Facilities:**

- Each plumbing fixture (toilets, lavatories, showers, bathtubs and drinking fountains, etc.) has specific requirements for: dimensional location, both vertical and horizontal; clear floor space; and location of controls.
- Make sure all required grab bars are shown at toilets, showers and bathtubs.
- Plumbing pipes for sinks and lavatories must be insulated.

**8. Signage:**

- Make friends with chapter 7 of the ADA Standards/ICC A117.1-2009 and Appendix E of the SBC. Pay particular attention to mounting height and horizontal locations for signs.
- Confirm all the proper qualities are specified for sign letters, braille etc.

**9. Non-residential Kitchens (including break rooms):**

- Make sure the clearance dimension between parallel base cabinets meets the standard defined for pass-thru or u-shaped layouts.
- All appliances must have a designated clear floor space.
- When a stove/range is provided, a 30" wide, 34" high clear workspace must be provided. (A cabinet may be provided if it is removable and the walls and floors behind it and under it are finished.)
- All operable elements must be within reach ranges designated in chapter 3.
- The sink must be installed so the counter or rim (whichever is higher) is not more than 34" above finish floor (AFF) and a clear floor space must be provided. See item 7 for other aspects to address.

**10. Built-in Elements:**

- When doing benches and sales and service counters, pay attention to allowable dimensions, distribution of accessible elements, clear floor spaces and approaches to each element.
- 5% of working and dining surfaces must be accessible. As with benches and sales/service counters, pay attention to allowable dimensions, distribution of accessible elements, clear floor spaces and approaches to each element.

**11. Recreation Facilities:**

- Play Areas – Provide an accessible route to each play area with minimum 80" vertical clearance. Transfer systems may be part of the accessible route. Make sure turning spaces are provided at the same level as play components. Provide clear floor space at play components.
- Exercise equipment – Provide an accessible route to all exercise equipment. Each piece of equipment must have a clear floor space, although two pieces of equipment can share an overlapping clear floor space.

**12. Art:**

- When art is included as part of a project, the art installation must be on an accessible route that will allow access for any visitor.
- Art can vary widely so ADA compliance for individual art installations will likely need to be evaluated on their own merits.
- ADA compliance will likely focus in the following areas: equal access, safe access for all, and providing alternative ways to experience the art when warranted.



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**Include the following drawings for review:**

- Provide an accessibility diagram similar to a code diagram that documents the required/proposed accessible routes.
- Provide enlarged floor plans for bathrooms that show clear floor spaces, turning spaces, door clearances and dimensions for all elements including grab bars, toilet location, showers, etc.
- Provide enlarged floor plans for kitchens that show clear floor spaces at all appliances, dimensional clearance between base cabinets, turning spaces, sink clearances, and location and dimensions of the ADA work space (if required).
- Provide interior elevations for ADA bathrooms that include mounting heights for all elements including grab bars, mirrors, paper towel dispensers, soap dispensers, toilet paper dispensers, coat hooks, etc. Show required counter/sink height with clearance below the lavatory including knee and toe clearance. Identify the required pipe insulation below the lavatory.
- Provide interior elevations for the kitchen that show counter heights, including at the sink and the clear work space (when required), show accessible controls and show lever faucet handles, etc.

The guidelines provided above are based on the *2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design* and *ICC/ANSI A117.1-2009*. However, they do not substitute for the study and understanding of the two accessibility standards referenced or the rest of the code resources listed at the top of the document.

With so many documents impacting the design requirements, it is not always clear what the best design choice will be. We are here to help. Please contact your ADA Compliance Team (ACT) with any questions, no matter how small. Our goal is to assist you in having projects that are 100 percent in compliance with ADA.

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Please visit our website for the most current information about ACT processes and possible updates to this document: <http://www.seattle.gov/contracting/ada.htm>

Besides inquiries via telephone or email, we are happy to meet with you to discuss the impact of the ADA on your project.

*Definitions:*

Lavatory: Bathroom sink