



• DESIGN • REVIEW • GUIDE •

Removing Barriers to Access

Burlington is well known as a community with a high quality of life, small and cohesive neighborhoods, a vibrant downtown and waterfront – all within a spectacular setting on the shores of Lake Champlain. This deserving reputation is due in part to the City's small size, entrepreneurial spirit, civic-minded citizens and activist government. One of the many factors that makes Burlington such a great place to live, work and visit is the community's attention to detail, and respect for its setting, heritage and quality urban design.

Burlington's Design Review process strives to protect the city's unique qualities and strong sense of place by carrying out citywide development and design objectives. The purpose of this *Design Review Guide* is to help applicants in preparing projects to be reviewed by the City's Design Advisory Board and Development Review Board. Through materials such as this, the Department of Planning & Zoning seeks to make information available well before the final design of a project saving the applicant, and the city, time and money.

Often one of the biggest challenges facing a property owner is providing access to your building for those with physical disabilities. Most of Burlington's buildings were built around the turn of the century, and little consideration was given to this issue. In most cases, an elevated main entrance was a design feature that served to identify and lend importance to the building. Now it is an access challenge!



Our desire to provide access for those with physical disabilities comes from a variety of places: the need to improve accessibility to a business or rental apartments, the result of a personal injury or illness, or a permitting requirement. State law requires

accessibility to places of public accommodation, public buildings, and commercial facilities by individuals with disabilities. This *Design Guide* is intended to help you think through some of your options, and offer sources of useful information.

WHERE TO START...

When considering accessibility, begin with the primary entrance to your building. As a rule, people with physical challenges should be able to use the same entrance as everyone-else. In fact, while some exceptions apply, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires equal access for both able and disabled people. Secondly, you need to think about more than just the doorway, and also provide an "accessible route" to the building as well.

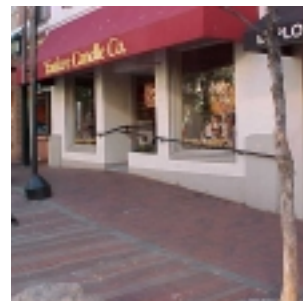
As with any other design process, start with a close look at both the site and the building. What is the style of the building – is it fancy or plain, has it been changed a lot over the years or is it still pretty 'original'?

Also look at the yard – is the building right on the front property line or set back with a front and side yard? Does the land slope up or down to the entrance?

Improving access involves removing barriers to an existing site and building. The goal should be to blend any additions or improvements with the site, and to match the existing design and materials of the building. Although there are specific requirements you need to follow, there are a wide range of options to consider.

COMMON SOLUTIONS

♦ **Raise (or lower) the ground in front of the entrance to provide the access at-grade.** In other words, could you bring in fill and regrade a portion of the front yard? This approach has been used quite successfully on Church Street and at the University.



The sidewalk was raised to provide a smooth transition between the street and entrance.



An extension to the sidewalk has been created linking the porch and walkway with a smooth and gradual route.

- ◆ **Incorporate a ramp within an existing front porch or entry area.** Additional benefits include: protection against the weather – less shoveling; it minimizes the visual impact of the ramp by hiding it within an existing architectural element; and, it may be less expensive if you can use the structure of the porch or entryway to help support the ramp.



SOME IMPORTANT DEFINITIONS:

Accessible Route: A continuous unobstructed path connecting all accessible elements and spaces of a building or facility. Interior accessible routes may include corridors, floors, ramps, elevators, lifts, and clear floor space at plumbing fixtures. Exterior accessible routes may include parking access aisles, curb ramps, crosswalks at vehicular ways, walks, ramps, and lifts.

Public Accommodations: Include a broad range of establishments (both for-profit and nonprofit) such as hotels, restaurants, theaters, museums, retail stores, private schools, banks, doctors' offices, and other places that serve the public. People who own, lease, lease out, or operate places of public accommodation in existing buildings are responsible for complying with the barrier removal requirement.

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS TO THINK ABOUT...

Look to our local building inspectors and ANSI manuals (American National Standards Institute's *American National Standard for Buildings and Facilities: Providing Accessibility and Usability for Physically Handicapped People* - ANSI A117.1-1986) for the technical requirements of providing access. A few key requirements to consider include:

- The slope of a ramp cannot exceed 1:12 or 1" of rise for every 12" of run;
- The door must be at least 32" wide and the access ramp must be at least 36" wide;
- The area or landing on either side of the entrance should be at least 5' square, or 60" by 60", to turn a wheelchair around on either side of the door;
- The door should not require more than 7.5 pounds of pull to open. Round doorknobs should be replaced or retrofitted with a lever handle, and there should be 18" of clear wall on the pull side of the door;

- The accessible entrance must have a completely accessible route leading to it. This includes a smooth and firm surface, no "lips" or bumps more than 1/4-inch high, and free from overhead and projecting obstructions; and,
- One of every 25 parking spaces, placed near the entrance, should be reserved for disabled visitors.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

city zoning permits & general information

- **Burlington Dept. of Planning & Zoning**

149 Church St.

Burlington, VT 05401

802.865.7188 www.ci.burlington.vt.us/planning/index.html

city building permits

- **Burlington Dept. of Public Works**

645 Pine St.

Burlington, VT 05401

802.863.9094 www.dpw.ci.burlington.vt.us/

city ADA Coordinator

- **Burlington Human Resources Dept.**

Rm. 33, City Hall

Burlington, VT 05401

802.865.7145

historic building rehabilitation

- **VT Division for Historic Preservation**

National Life Bldg., Drawer 20

Montpelier, VT 05620-0501

800.622.4553 www.uvm.edu/~vhnet/hpres/org/vdhp/vdhp1

state access rules

- **VT Dept. of Labor and Industry**

National Life Building, Drawer 20

Montpelier, Vermont 05620-3401

802.828.2288 www.state.vt.us/labind/



Here a hydraulic lift was installed where there wasn't enough room to build a ramp.

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