



Town of Clifton Park

Physical Accessibility to Programs and Services

S9-24-27 | February 2025

Contents

- Report Highlights 1**

- Physical Accessibility to Programs and Services 2**
 - Steps Identified to Potentially Increase Physical Accessibility to Programs and Services at Selected Town Facilities. 2
 - What Do We Recommend? 4

- Appendix A – Response From Town Officials 5**

- Appendix B – Potential Physical Accessibility Improvements 7**

- Appendix C – Audit Methodology and Standards 9**

- Appendix D – Resources and Services. 10**

Report Highlights

Town of Clifton Park

Audit Objective

Assess whether Town of Clifton Park (Town) officials could take additional steps to increase physical accessibility to programs and services provided at selected Town facilities.

Key Findings

Of the 562 applicable physical accessibility components (components) we reviewed, we identified 47 components (8 percent) where Town officials could consider taking additional steps to increase physical accessibility at selected Town facilities. Specifically:

- 21 components at the Town Hall, such as interior office signs with raised lettering and Braille.
- 12 components at the Town Court, such as a water fountain mounted at the proper height.
- Nine components at the Senior Center, such as restroom lavatory pipes insulated to prevent contact.
- Three components at the Transfer Station, such as accessible parking spaces with signs to identify accessible parking spaces.
- Two components at the Building and Grounds Department, including interior office signs with raised lettering and Braille and signs identifying van accessible parking spaces.

Recommendation

Town officials should assess the feasibility of taking additional steps to increase physical accessibility for the 47 components identified in this report. Town officials agreed with our findings and indicated they plan to initiate corrective action.

Audit Period

January 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024

Background

The Town is located in Saratoga County and is governed by an elected five-member Town Board (Board) composed of a Town Supervisor (Supervisor) and four Board members. The Supervisor is responsible for the overall administration of the Town government.

The Town provides programs and services at the Town Hall, such as:

- The Town Clerk’s Office (various licenses and permits, freedom of information act requests, etc.),
- The Receiver of Taxes’ Office (collection of taxes and related inquiries),
- The Building and Development Department (building permits, code complaints, etc.), and
- Public meetings of the Board and Planning Board, among others.

The Buildings and Grounds Department, Town Court, Transfer Station and Senior Center are also accessible to the public.

Quick Facts

Town	
Population	38,209
2023 General Fund Expenditures	\$17.9 million
Number of Employees	138

Physical Accessibility to Programs and Services

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, more than one in four adults in the United States have some type of disability and more than one in 10 have a mobility disability with serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs.¹ It is important that someone with a disability can participate in their local government's decision-making process and be provided the same services and program opportunities as everyone else.

Title II of the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability by state and local governments. Generally, under the ADA's implementing regulations, a public entity may not deny the benefits of its programs, activities, and services to individuals with disabilities because its facilities are inaccessible. While not required to make each existing facility accessible, public entities must operate each service, program, or activity so that, when viewed in its entirety, it is readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities.

The 2010 ADA Standard for Accessible Design (Standards) set minimum scoping and technical requirements for newly designed and constructed or altered state and local government facilities, public accommodations and commercial facilities. For any new construction or alteration that began on or after March 15, 2012, the project must comply with the Standards. An alteration is defined as a change to a building or facility that affects or could affect the usability of the entire building or facility or a portion thereof.

Although the Standards apply to new construction and alterations that began on or after March 15, 2012, we used the Standards as a tool to help identify where Town officials could consider taking additional steps to increase physical accessibility to programs and services at selected existing structures within the Town, whether built before or after March 2012. The potential improvements to physical accessibility identified in this report, however, are intended for informational purposes only and should not be construed as the Office of the State Comptroller (OSC) opining as to the legality of the Town's compliance with ADA requirements.

Steps Identified to Potentially Increase Physical Accessibility to Programs and Services at Selected Town Facilities

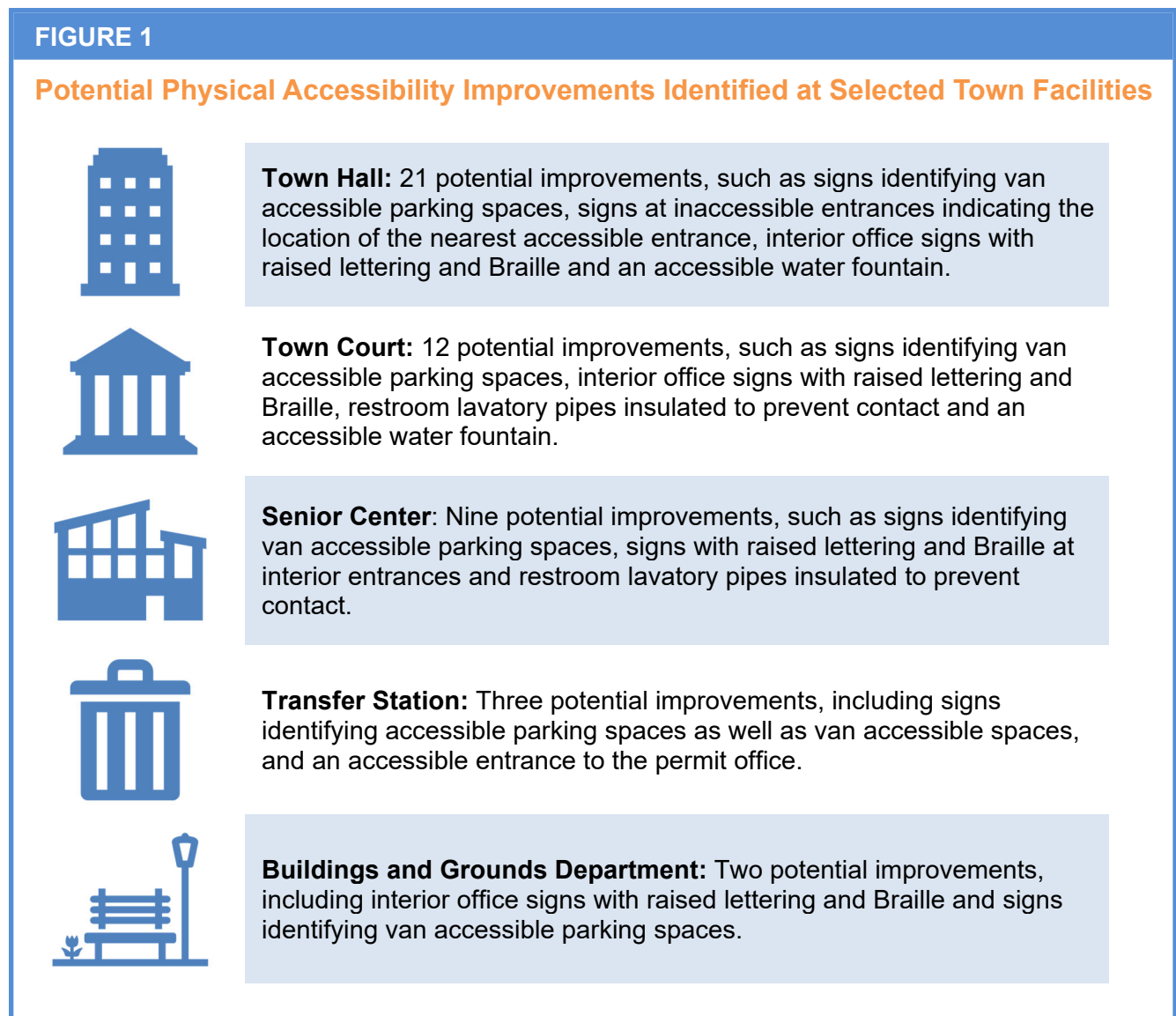
We reviewed physical accessibility to programs and services provided at the Town Hall (including the separate entrances for the Building and Development Department and the Town Clerk), Buildings and Grounds Department, Town Court, Transfer Station and Senior Center, including access to Town department offices, public meeting spaces and restrooms located within these buildings.

We performed site visits at each of these buildings and their respective parking lots (together "facilities") and used the ADA Checklist for Existing Facilities² (ADA Checklist), which incorporates the Standards, as a tool to assess the accessibility of the sampled facilities.

1 https://www.cdc.gov/disability-and-health/articles-documents/disability-impacts-all-of-us-infographic.html?CDC_AAref_Val=https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/infographic-disability-impacts-all.html#cdc_cover_page_files_add_file_info-disability-impacts-all-of-us-infographic

2 Produced by the New England ADA Center, the checklist was created to review existing facilities using the 2010 Standards for Accessible Design: <https://www.adachecklist.org/checklist.html>. Similar to the use of the Standards, the checklist was used as a tool to identify potential improvements to physical accessibility. The use of the checklist, however, is for informational purposes only and should not be construed as OSC opining on the legality of the Town's compliance with ADA requirements.

We reviewed 562 applicable physical accessibility components at the selected facilities and identified 47 components (8 percent) where Town officials could consider taking additional steps to increase physical accessibility, including 21 components at Town Hall, 12 components at the Town Court, nine components at the Senior Center, three components at the Transfer Station and two components at the Building and Grounds Department (Figure 1).



Examples of the potential improvements we identified and photographed at the facilities, along with a complete table of potential accessibility improvements, are included in Appendix B.

What Do We Recommend?

1. Town officials should assess the feasibility of taking additional steps to increase physical accessibility for the 47 components identified in this report.

Appendix A: Response From Town Officials



Town of Clifton Park

Planning Department

One Town Hall Plaza | Clifton Park, New York 12065
(518) 371-6054 | Planning@Cliftonpark.org

SENT VIA EMAIL

January 28, 2028

Dina M.L. Thompson
Chief of Municipal Audits
State Office Building, Suite 1702
44 Hawley Street
Binghamton, NY 13901-4417

Subject: Response to Report S9-24-27, Physical Accessibility to Programs and Services

Dear Ms. Thompson,

The Town of Clifton Park acknowledges receipt of the New York State Comptroller's Office Report of Examination (S9-24-27), which identifies 47 components where additional steps could be taken to enhance physical accessibility to Town programs and services. We appreciate the thorough assessment conducted by your office and the constructive recommendations aimed at improving accessibility across the Town's facilities.

The Town of Clifton Park has always taken the topic of accessibility for every resident very seriously and the results of the audit substantiate the positive environment we have established. In 2023 we submitted a grant application to conduct an updated ADA Transition Plan to assess policies and procedures we can consider to enhance current conditions for accessibility and incorporate new elements of a successful plan in the future. We were not successful with our initial application, but in early 2024, we were awarded the grant. We have made substantial progress on a new ADA Transition Plan. Subsequently, the OSC contacted the Town and stated their intention to conduct this audit. We welcome the recommendations listed through this very comprehensive audit. We have already made changes to many of the signage recommendations listed in the audit.

The Town Board has taken aggressive action to increase accessibility within our entire Town operations. For example, as the Town has developed an extensive Trail and Sidewalk network, we have ensured all ADA regulations have been implemented, including new pedestrian crosswalks. We have also upgraded playground facilities with new options for accessibility. We will continue to make improvements and follow the results of our updated ADA Transition Plan.

As a Town committed to inclusivity and compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), we view this report as a valuable tool to augment our ongoing efforts to provide equitable access to all residents. The findings in this report will directly inform the continued development and implementation of the Town's ADA Transition Plan, which focuses on accessibility improvements for both Town-owned facilities and offsite infrastructure such as sidewalks, multi-use paths, and crosswalks.

Below, we provide a summary of our general approach to addressing the identified components:

Assessment and Prioritization

Town Staff is developing a feasibility analysis of the 47 identified components to determine scope, cost, and priority. This includes reviewing components such as raised-lettering signage, water fountains, restroom improvements, parking accessibility, and entryways. Special consideration will be given to areas with the most significant impact on public access and safety, including Town Hall, the Town Court, and the Senior Center.

Implementation Plan and Timeline

The Town will incorporate the findings into its ADA Transition Plan, developing a phased implementation schedule based on prioritization, budget availability, grant funding opportunities, and project complexity. This will ensure a strategic and organized approach to addressing these components while minimizing disruption to Town operations and services. Understanding the greatest expense and costs are likely replacing handrail systems to meet current standards as opposed to the standards at time of original installation. For example, while all ADA parking spaces within the Town facilities are van accessible, the van-accessible supplemental plaque has been added to the accessible parking spaces as identified in the report.

Funding Opportunities

Recognizing the financial implications of these improvements, the Town intends to pursue available grant funding to offset project costs. Potential funding sources include state and federal ADA compliance grants, and other accessibility-specific funding programs.

Continuous Improvement

Beyond addressing the 47 identified components, the Town is committed to ongoing evaluation and improvement of accessibility at all Town facilities. Staff will receive periodic training to ensure that accessibility considerations are integrated into future projects and daily operations.

The Town of Clifton Park appreciates the New York State Comptroller's Office's guidance and support in advancing accessibility within our community. We are confident that implementing the recommendations outlined in the report will further our commitment to inclusivity and compliance with ADA standards.

A more detailed corrective action plan (CAP), as outlined in the report, will be submitted to you. Should you require any additional information or wish to discuss our response further, please do not hesitate to contact me at 518-371-6651 or by email at pbarrett@cliftonpark.org.

Thank you for your partnership in this important initiative.

Sincerely,

Philip C. Barrett,
Clifton Park Town Supervisor

Appendix B: Potential Physical Accessibility Improvements

FIGURE 2

Potential Physical Accessibility Improvement Examples^a



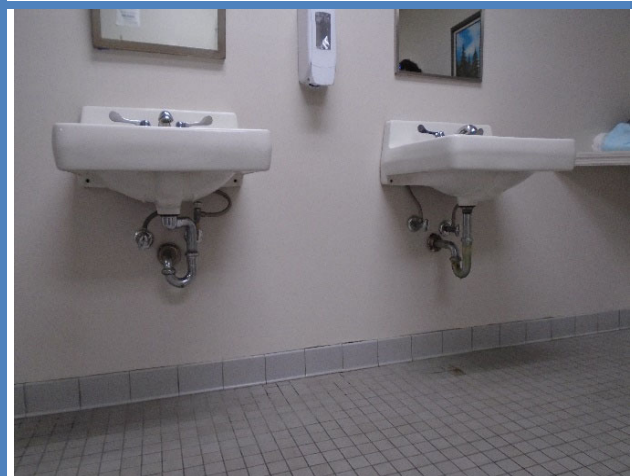
No "van accessible" signs at van accessible spaces at the Town Hall.



Signs without raised lettering and Braille at the Town Hall.



Water fountain mounted too high at the Town Hall.



Restroom sink pipes not insulated or configured to protect against contact in the Senior Center.

a) Photos taken by OSC auditors in September 2024 with permission from local officials.

Figure 3: Potential Physical Accessibility Improvements by Component

Accessibility Checklist Component Category	Applicable Checklist Components Reviewed	Potential Improvements Identified	Percentage With Potential Improvements Identified
Accessible Route	73	0	0%
Controls	3	0	0%
Curb Ramps	5	0	0%
Drinking Fountains	18	2	11%
Elevators	7	1	14%
Entrance	95	4	4%
Interior Doors	35	2	6%
Lavatories	42	4	10%
Parking	77	8	10%
Ramps	31	1	3%
Rooms and Spaces	3	0	0%
Seating	7	0	0%
Signs	12	9	75%
Soap Dispensers and Hand Dryers	12	0	0%
Toilet Compartments (Stalls)	50	0	0%
Toilet Rooms (Bathrooms)	29	4	14%
Water Closets (Toilets)	63	12	19%
Totals	562	47	8%

Appendix C: Audit Methodology and Standards

We conducted this audit pursuant to Article V, Section 1 of the State Constitution and the State Comptroller's authority as set forth in Article 3 of the New York State General Municipal Law. We obtained an understanding of internal controls that we deemed significant within the context of the audit objective and assessed those controls. Information related to the scope of our work on internal controls, as well as the work performed in our audit procedures to achieve the audit objective and obtain valid audit evidence, included the following:

- We selected the Town from a list of all cities, towns and villages (excluding NYC) not currently in OSC's audit process at the time of selection. We divided the list into seven regions and used expenditure data reported in the 2023 fiscal year to judgmentally select cities, towns and villages from these regions for an even representation across the State for this multi-unit audit.
- We reviewed applicable laws and regulations, as well as any policies and procedures the Town had regarding accessibility. The potential improvements to physical accessibility identified in the report, however, are intended for informational purposes only and should not be construed as OSC opining as to the legality of the Town's compliance with ADA requirements.
- We interviewed Town staff and reviewed Board meeting minutes to gain an understanding of accessibility for the Town's programs and services.
- We reviewed accessibility to programs and services provided at Town facilities, excluding recreational programs and services provided by third parties. We used the ADA Checklist for Existing Facilities, which uses the 2010 ADA Standards, as a tool to review accessibility at the sampled facilities. We reviewed the accessibility components applicable at each sampled facility including accessible parking, approaches to buildings, building entrances, accessibility within buildings including to meeting rooms, offices providing programs and services, restrooms, and water fountains.

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards (GAGAS). Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objective. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objective.

Unless otherwise indicated in this report, samples for testing were selected based on professional judgment, as it was not the intent to project the results onto the entire population. Where applicable, information is presented concerning the value and/or size of the relevant population and the sample selected for examination.

The Board has the responsibility to initiate corrective action. A written corrective action plan (CAP) that addresses the findings and recommendations in this report should be prepared and provided to our office within 90 days, pursuant to Section 35 of General Municipal Law. For more information on preparing and filing your CAP, please refer to our brochure, *Responding to an OSC Audit Report*, which you received with the draft audit report. We encourage the Board to make the CAP available for public review in the Town Clerk's office.

Appendix D: Resources and Services

Regional Office Directory

www.osc.ny.gov/files/local-government/pdf/regional-directory.pdf

Cost-Saving Ideas – Resources, advice and assistance on cost-saving ideas

www.osc.ny.gov/local-government/publications

Fiscal Stress Monitoring – Resources for local government officials experiencing fiscal problems

www.osc.ny.gov/local-government/fiscal-monitoring

Local Government Management Guides – Series of publications that include technical information and suggested practices for local government management

www.osc.ny.gov/local-government/publications

Planning and Budgeting Guides – Resources for developing multiyear financial, capital, strategic and other plans

www.osc.ny.gov/local-government/resources/planning-resources

Protecting Sensitive Data and Other Local Government Assets – A non-technical cybersecurity guide for local government leaders

www.osc.ny.gov/files/local-government/publications/pdf/cyber-security-guide.pdf

Required Reporting – Information and resources for reports and forms that are filed with the Office of the State Comptroller

www.osc.ny.gov/local-government/required-reporting

Research Reports/Publications – Reports on major policy issues facing local governments and State policy-makers

www.osc.ny.gov/local-government/publications

Training – Resources for local government officials on in-person and online training opportunities on a wide range of topics

www.osc.ny.gov/local-government/academy

Contact

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Division of Local Government and School Accountability
110 State Street, 12th Floor, Albany, New York 12236

Tel: (518) 474-4037 • Fax: (518) 486-6479 • Email: localgov@osc.ny.gov

<https://www.osc.ny.gov/local-government>

Local Government and School Accountability Help Line: (866) 321-8503

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