



Town of Colonie

Physical Accessibility to Programs and Services

S9-24-41 | March 2025

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Report Highlights

Town of Colonie

Audit Objective

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

Key Findings

Of the 814 applicable physical accessibility components (components) we reviewed, we identified 67 components (8 percent) where Town officials could consider taking additional steps to increase physical accessibility at selected facilities. Specifically:

- 26 components at the Public Operations Center, such as signs at interior offices with raised lettering and Braille mounted at an accessible height.
- 22 components at the Town Hall, such as a wider accessible route at the main entrance ramp where the ramp changes direction.
- 15 components at the Public Safety Center, such as a portion of service counters at an accessible height.
- Four components at the Library, such as signs identifying van accessible parking spaces.

Recommendation

Town officials should assess the feasibility of taking additional steps to increase physical accessibility for the 67 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 Albany County and is governed by an elected Town Board (Board) composed of the Town Supervisor and six Board members. The Town Supervisor is responsible for the overall administration of the Town.

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

- The Town Clerk's Office (various licenses, permits and certifications, maintaining municipal records, etc.),
- The Assessor's Office (administration of real property for tax purposes and exemptions, etc.), and
- Public meetings of the Board and other Boards and Councils.

The Public Operations Center, Public Safety Center and Library are also accessible to the public.

Quick Facts

Town	
Population	85,591
2023 General Fund Expenditures	\$63.3 million
Number of Employees	600

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, Public Operations Center, Public Safety Center and Library, including access to Town department offices, public meetings 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

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

We reviewed 814 applicable physical accessibility components at the selected facilities and identified 67 components (8 percent) where Town officials could consider taking additional steps to increase physical accessibility, including 26 components at the Public Operations Center, 22 components at the Town Hall, 15 components at the Public Safety Center and four components at the Library (Figure 1).

FIGURE 1

Potential Physical Accessibility Improvements Identified at Selected Town Facilities



Public Operations Center: 26 potential improvements, such as signs identifying van accessible parking spaces, a secured mat at the main entrance, signs at interior offices with raised lettering and Braille mounted at an accessible height, a portion of service counters at an accessible height and restrooms with wider accessible stalls, self-closing stall doors and rear grab bars.



Town Hall: 22 potential improvements, such as signs identifying van accessible parking spaces, a platform at least 60 inches by 60 inches where the accessible ramp changes direction, interior office signs with raised lettering and Braille, a portion of service counters at an accessible height, self-closing doors on accessible restroom stalls and hand dryers mounted at an accessible height.



Public Safety Center: 15 potential improvements, such as the required number of accessible parking spaces, signs identifying van accessible spaces, interior signs with raised lettering or Braille, a portion of service counters at an accessible height and restrooms with wider accessible stalls, self-closing stall doors and rear grab bars.



Library: Four potential improvements, including signs identifying van accessible parking, tactile stars on the first-floor elevator jambs, the towel dispenser in the family restroom mounted at an accessible height and the flush control on the open side of the toilet.

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 67 components identified in this report.

Appendix A: Response From Town Officials



Peter G. Crummey
Town Supervisor

TOWN OF COLONIE

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Julie L. Gansle
Town Clerk

Holly A. Marois
Deputy Town Clerk

February 13, 2025

Office of the State Comptroller
Division of Local Government &
School Accountability
110 State Street, 12th Floor
Albany, New York 12236

RE: Town of Colonie Audit Response

Dear Sir/Madam:

The Town of Colonie (hereinafter the "Town") is in receipt of the Draft Audit Report of Physical Accessibility to Programs and Services provided to the Town on January 14, 2025. Members of the Town's ADA Committee have reviewed the preliminary findings and have no objection to the information or recommendations contained therein.

The Town of Colonie is committed to taking steps to increase and improve physical accessibility to Town-owned buildings. The Town plans to engage an engineering firm to re-design the entrance ramp to Town Hall and provide a larger landing where the ramp changes direction. Additionally, the Town is in the process of purchasing signs with raised text characters and Braille for placement throughout all facilities. We look forward to receiving the Final Audit Report so that we may continue implementing positive changes and making appropriate modifications to Town properties.

Thank you for your efforts during the engagement process as well as the recommendations provided. As always, if I may be of any additional assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Very truly yours,

Julie L. Gansle
Colonie Town Clerk

Appendix B: Potential Physical Accessibility Improvements

FIGURE 2

Potential Physical Accessibility Improvement Examples^a



Signs in the Public Operations Center were mounted too high and without raised lettering and Braille.



Ramp at the Town Hall main entrance did not have a level landing of at least 60 inches by 60 inches where the ramp changes direction.



Service counters at the Public Safety Center without an accessible portion no higher than 36 inches.



No signs identifying van accessible parking spaces at the Library.

a) Photos taken by OSC auditors in November 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	58	0	0%
Curb Ramps	10	0	0%
Drinking Fountains	20	0	0%
Elevators	14	2	0%
Entrance	116	3	3%
Interior Doors	90	0	0%
Lavatories	84	0	0%
Parking	44	5	11%
Ramps	11	1	0%
Rooms and Spaces	3	0	0%
Sales and Service Counters	24	6	25%
Seating	22	0	0%
Signs	34	19	56%
Soap Dispensers and Hand Dryers	24	2	8%
Toilet Compartments (Stalls)	82	11	13%
Toilet Rooms (Bathrooms)	52	1	2%
Water Closets (Toilets)	126	17	13%
Totals	814	67	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 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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