



# City of New Rochelle

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## Physical Accessibility to Programs and Services

**S9-24-38 | February 2025**

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# Report Highlights

City of New Rochelle

## Audit Objective

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

## Key Findings

Of the 895 applicable physical accessibility components (components) we reviewed, we identified 171 components (19 percent) where City officials could consider taking additional steps to increase physical accessibility at selected City facilities. Specifically:

- 97 components at City Hall, such as signs identifying van accessible parking spaces, properly sloped access ramps, interior doorways with an operating width of at least 32 inches and wheelchair accessible lavatories in restrooms.
- 38 components at the Senior Center, such as accessible parking spaces with signs and marked access aisles, interior signs with raised lettering and Braille and interior doors with accessible hardware that does not require grasping or twisting.
- 20 components at the Police/Court Facility, such as elevator doors that reopen automatically when obstructed by an object or person and restroom soap dispensers and hand dryers mounted at an accessible height.
- 16 components at the Fire Department Headquarters, such as access ramps with railings on both sides and mats with secured edges at the main entrance.

## Recommendation

City officials should assess the feasibility of taking additional steps to increase physical accessibility for the 171 components identified in this report.

City officials agreed with our findings and indicated they plan to initiate corrective action.

## Audit Period

January 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024

## Background

The City is located in Westchester County and is governed by an elected Mayor and six-member City Council (Council). The City Manager is responsible for the overall administration of the City government.

The City provides programs and services at City Hall, such as:

- The City Clerk’s Office (various licenses and permits, freedom of information act requests, etc.),
- The Finance Department (collection of taxes and related inquiries),
- The Building Department (building permits, code complaints, etc.),
- Public meetings of the Council and other Boards, Committees and Commissions.

The Senior Center, Police/Court Facility and Fire Department Headquarters are also accessible to the public.

### Quick Facts

City	
Population	79,726
2023 General Fund Expenditures	\$164.5 million
Number of Employees	656

# Physical Accessibility to Programs and Services

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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.<sup>1</sup> 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 City officials could consider taking additional steps to increase physical accessibility to programs and services at selected existing structures within the City, 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 City's compliance with ADA requirements.

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

We reviewed physical accessibility to programs and services provided at City Hall, the Senior Center, Police/Court Facility and Fire Department Headquarters, including access to City department offices, public meeting spaces and restrooms located within these buildings.

We also performed site visits at each of these buildings and their respective parking lots (together "facilities") and used the ADA Checklist for Existing Facilities<sup>2</sup> (ADA Checklist), which incorporates the Standards, as a tool to assess the accessibility of the sampled facilities.

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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](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 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 City's compliance with ADA requirements.

We reviewed 895 applicable physical accessibility components at the selected facilities and identified 171 components (19 percent) where City officials could consider taking additional steps to increase physical accessibility, including 97 components at City Hall, 38 components at the Senior Center, 20 components at the Police/Court Facility, and 16 components at the Fire Department Headquarters (Figure 1).

FIGURE 1

### Potential Physical Accessibility Improvements Identified at Selected City Facilities



**City Hall:** 97 potential improvements, such as signs identifying van accessible parking spaces, carpets with attached edges at entrances, properly sloped access ramps, interior doorways with an operating width of at least 32 inches and wheelchair accessible lavatories in restrooms.



**Senior Center:** 38 potential improvements, such as accessible parking spaces with signs and marked access aisles, interior signs with raised lettering and Braille and interior doors with accessible hardware that does not require grasping or twisting.



**Police/Court Facility:** 20 potential improvements, such as courtroom signs with raised lettering and Braille mounted at an accessible height, elevator doors that reopen automatically when obstructed by an object or person and restroom soap dispensers and hand dryers mounted at an accessible height.



**Fire Department Headquarters:** 16 potential improvements, such as access ramps with railings on both sides and curbs or barriers to prevent wheelchair casters or crutch tips from falling off and mats with secured edges at the main entrance.

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. City officials should assess the feasibility of taking additional steps to increase physical accessibility for the 171 components identified in this report.

# Appendix A: Response From City Officials

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## City of New Rochelle New York

February 12, 2025

Office of the New York State Comptroller  
Division of Local Government and School Accountability  
Statewide Audit Unit  
110 State Street, 12th Floor  
Albany, NY 12236

Sent Via Email To: [Muni-Statewide@osc.ny.gov](mailto:Muni-Statewide@osc.ny.gov)

RE: Physical Accessibility to Programs and Services Draft Report S9-24-38

Dear Chief of Municipal Audits,

The City of New Rochelle is in receipt of the draft audit report S9-24-38 from the New York State Comptroller's Division of Local Government and School Accountability regarding Physical Accessibility to Programs and Services here in the City of New Rochelle. As City Manager, I acknowledge and accept this report as presented to us via email on January 13, 2025.

My staff and I have preliminarily reviewed the draft audit report and agree with the 171 recommendations outlined therein. We have identified issues that can be addressed almost immediately such as the updating of signage with braille and the replacement of door knobs. We will continue to review and analyze the additional findings to assess which improvements can be made based on available resources in 2025 and beyond.

The City of New Rochelle is committed to improving accessibility at all city-owned facilities. We will continue to advance strategies for identifying and addressing potential accessibility barriers and make necessary changes to comply with the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design. Please extend my thanks to the two auditors who performed our audit, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. Both were very professional and extremely thorough in their explanation of the audit process and procedures.

Sincerely,

Wilfredo Melendez, P.E.  
City Manager

Cc: Mayor & City Council

# Appendix B: Potential Physical Accessibility Improvements

FIGURE 2

## Potential Physical Accessibility Improvement Examples<sup>a</sup>



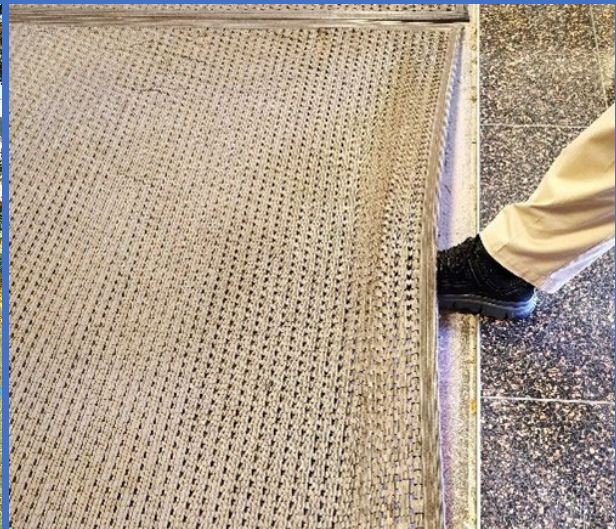
Access ramp to the Fire Department Headquarters does not have handrails on both sides or a curb or other barrier.



Interior access ramp in City Hall is not properly sloped.



Accessible parking spaces with no signs or access aisles at the Senior Center.



Mat at entrance to Fire Department Headquarters is not secure to the floor.

a) Photos taken by OSC auditors in October 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	46	0	0%
Curb Ramps	5	2	40%
Drinking Fountains	18	3	17%
Elevators	14	3	21%
Entrance	112	11	10%
Interior Doors	146	20	14%
Lavatories	84	6	7%
Parking	20	4	20%
Ramps	33	11	33%
Rooms and Spaces	41	0	0%
Sales and Service Counters	33	5	15%
Seating	37	0	0%
Signs	32	25	78%
Soap Dispensers and Hand Dryers	24	11	46%
Toilet Compartments (Stalls)	75	22	29%
Toilet Rooms (Bathrooms)	52	11	21%
Water Closets (Toilets)	123	37	30%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>895</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>19%</b>



## Appendix C: Audit Methodology and Standards

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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 City 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 City 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 City's compliance with ADA requirements.
- We interviewed City staff and reviewed Council meeting minutes to gain an understanding of accessibility for the City's programs and services.
- We reviewed accessibility to programs and services provided at City 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 Council 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 Council to make the CAP available for public review in the City Clerk's office.

## Appendix D: Resources and Services

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### **Regional Office Directory**

[www.osc.ny.gov/files/local-government/pdf/regional-directory.pdf](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://www.osc.ny.gov/local-government/academy)

## Contact

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

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

**STATEWIDE AUDITS** – Dina M.L. Thompson, Chief of Municipal Audits

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