



**AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT
SELF-EVALUATION
AND
PROGRAM ACCESS PLAN**

Introduction and Background

The City of Ridgefield is committed to providing equal access to all its public programs, services and activities for citizens with disabilities. This plan will be used to help guide future planning and implementation of necessary accessibility improvements. The City will update the plan periodically and is always seeking public comments on necessary changes and improvements.

Federal Requirements

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 requires cities with fewer than fifty employees that is a recipient or subrecipient of Federal financial assistance to prepare a self-evaluation and ADA Program Access Plan.

The U.S. Congress signed the ADA in 1990, and it went into effect in 1992. The ADA is a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in access to jobs, public accommodations, government services and programs, public transportation and telecommunications.

Title I of the ADA prohibits local governments from discriminating against qualified individuals with disabilities in job application procedures, hiring, employment termination, job promotion, compensation, job training and other terms, conditions and privileges of employment. The City of Ridgefield is an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) employer and adheres to the requirements of Title I.

Title II of the ADA adopts the general prohibitions against discrimination contained in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, but applies to all state and local governments regardless of whether or not they receive federal funding. It prohibits the City from denying persons with disabilities the equal opportunity to participate in its services, programs or activities, either directly or indirectly through contractual arrangements.

The administrative requirements contained in Title II that apply to the City are:

- Designation of an ADA Coordinator responsible for overseeing Title II compliance,
- Development of an ADA grievance/complaint procedure;
- Completion of a self-evaluation of facilities, programs and services; and
- Development of a program access plan if the self-evaluation identifies any accessibility deficiencies.

ADA Coordinator

The Deputy City Manager/Human Resources Manager was designated as the ADA Coordinator. This position is responsible for ensuring that all programs, services and activities of the City of Ridgefield are accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities. She reports directly to the City Manager. The City's ADA Coordinator is:

Lee Knottnerus
230 Pioneer Street
P.O. Box 608
Ridgefield, WA 98642
Lee.Knottnerus@ci.ridgefield.wa.us
360-887-3557

Requesting Accommodation

Requests for accommodation (e.g., translator, barrier removal, etc.) or documents/materials in alternate formats should be made as soon as the need for the accommodation is known.

Requests should be made to the ADA Coordinator as follows:

Requests for accommodation at a City meeting or event should include:

- The requestor's name, address, email and telephone number.
- A description of the programs, service or activity where the accommodation is required.
- The location of the program, service or activity.
- A brief description of why the accommodation is needed.

Requests for materials in alternate formats should include:

- The requestor's name, address, email and telephone number.
- The name and description of the City document or materials to be reformatted.
- What type of format is desired (e.g., braille, audio recording, computer disk, etc.)
- A brief description of why the alternate format is needed.

The ADA Coordinator will respond to the request with 15 calendar days or in advance of the scheduled meeting or event. If the response does not satisfactorily resolve the issue, the requestor may file a formal grievance with the City. All requests for accommodations and alternate formats will be kept on file for at least three years.

Filing a Grievance

The City of Ridgefield has a formal grievance procedure in place to provide citizens a means to file complaints regarding:

- City of Ridgefield policies or its provisions of services, activities and programs to persons with disabilities;
- Alleged violations of Title II of the ADA or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act by the City of Ridgefield, its departments or employees; and
- Structural and parking accessibility issues on City-owned or controlled property.

The ADA Coordinator is limited to the funding already available for capital improvement projects when responding to grievances that request barrier removal or structural modifications. In the event that the available funds are insufficient or already expended on other projects, improvements will be prioritized and scheduled in subsequent fiscal years.

The availability and use of this grievance procedure does not preclude filing a complaint of discrimination with any appropriate state or federal agency. Use of this grievance procedure is not a prerequisite in the pursuit of other remedies.

Step 1. To file a grievance, send a letter or an email to the ADA Coordinator that includes all of the following information:

- The full name, address and telephone number of the person filing the grievance.
- The full name, address and telephone number of the person who was discriminated against (if someone other than the grievant).

- The name and address of the program, service, activity or facility where the incident took place.
- A description of the incident, the date(s) it occurred and the name(s) of any city employees involved (if known).
- Any other information necessary to support the grievance.

The ADA Coordinator will notify the grievant in writing if any additional information is needed. If the requested information is not provided, the ADA Coordinator will close the grievance.

Step 2. The ADA Coordinator will meet with or contact the grievant within 15 days of receipt of the grievance to discuss possible solutions.

Step 3. Within 30 calendar days of that meeting or discussion, the ADA Coordinator will respond in writing or in a format accessible to the grievant, explaining the position of the City of Ridgefield and offering options for resolution.

If the response does not satisfactorily resolve the issue, the grievant may appeal the decision to the City Manager within 10 calendar days after receiving the response. The appeal should be in writing and provide an explanation about why the City's initial response was not satisfactory. Steps 1-3 will then begin again with the City Manager as the primary contact.

All formal grievances received by the ADA Coordinator, appeals to the City Manager and responses from the City will be kept on file for at least three years.

Self-Evaluation and Program Access Plan

The Self-Evaluation is the City's internal assessment of the accessibility of its facilities, programs, services and activities. It included site assessment surveys of all public facilities, parks and roads owned by the City of Ridgefield, and a written survey of all City departments about the accessibility of their programs, services and activities.

Public Outreach

The current plan has been posted on the City's website. Key stakeholder groups and the general public are invited to review and provide input on it. Comments should be directed to the ADA Coordinator.

The City will update the plan and its associated improvement project lists once per year to reflect completed improvement projects, or additions or change suggested by the public, as appropriate.

State and Local Requirements

The State of Washington officially adopted the International Building Code (IBC) as its building code in 2004 (RCW 19.27 and 70.92). The IBC includes provisions ensuring that public facilities are accessible to and usable by persons with disabilities.

Pursuant to requirements of RCW 19.27, the City of Ridgefield also adopted the IBC as its building code.

Funding Sources

The primary sources of funding for accessibility-related improvement projects on City property is the General Fund, real estate excise taxes accrued to the Street Fund, the Utility Fund and grants. Due to reduced support for grant programs and competing priorities, the City of Ridgefield is experiencing limited ability to fund accessibility improvement projects.

Accessibility improvements that can be made through general maintenance of City facilities or as part of the regular administrative duties of department staff will typically be completed first; with larger capital improvement projects being completed when necessary funding is available.

Undue Burden

According to the ADA, the City is not required to take any action that it can demonstrate would result in a fundamental alteration in the nature of a program or activity, would create a hazardous condition for other people, or would represent an undue financial and administrative burden. This determination can only be made by the ADA Coordinator or designee and must be accompanied by a statement citing the reasons for reaching that conclusion.

The determination that an undue financial burden would result must be based on an evaluation of all resources available for use in a program. For example, if a barrier removal action is judged unduly burdensome, the City must consider other options for providing access that would ensure that individuals with disabilities receive the benefits and services of the program or activity.

Programs, Services and Activities

All City departments currently strive to provide full and equal access to all its services, programs and activities for people with disabilities.

Public Meetings, Hearings and Events. The City works hard to ensure its public meetings, hearings and events are open and accessible to all citizens, regardless of disability. In addition, the City works directly with community event organizers to help ensure events using City streets, parks or other resources are compliant with the ADA. For example:

- All departments that host public meetings, hearings or other public events provide accommodations to people with disabilities as requested.
- The City assures that doorways and primary paths of travel at a meeting or event location are clear of obstructions or barriers.
- The City includes a statement on agendas and invitations to meetings with information on how to request an accommodation.

Printed Materials. The City provides a variety of informational and promotional materials for public use including maps, brochures, forms, newsletters, fact sheets, reports, and plans. All departments should be able to provide documents and other printed materials in alternate formats, as requested.

Website. The City of Ridgefield completed a comprehensive redesign of its website in 2016. The new design includes a variety of accessibility-related improvements, including text size and color, provides alternate text on photos and provides PDF documents.

Contracting/Purchasing. The City currently uses criteria that do not discriminate based on disability when selecting contractors, consultants or vendors for City projects or services. The City also includes a statement in all Requests for Proposal and other bid solicitation documents explaining that businesses, organizations and individuals contracting with the City of Ridgefield must comply with Title II of the ADA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act AND requires all City contractors, consultants and vendors to sign a statement attesting to their intent to comply.

Staff Training. The City's Employment Policies, which are available to all current employees and provided to all new hires, contain information about the ADA as it relates to employees. Additional training and written procedures should be developed to provide more comprehensive information about the requirements and regulations of the ADA and the Rehabilitation Act. The City should also provide annual reminders about the requirements of the ADA.

City Facilities, Streets and Parks. The City has conducted a variety of site visits, surveys and inventories of its facilities, sidewalks, curb ramps and parks starting after the ADA became law in 1992. Since then, it has conducted an aggressive program of repair and renovation to correct many identified barriers and deficiencies. Today, the majority of the City's public facilities are ADA compliant and it continues to make progress on installing curb cuts and sidewalks along its roadways.

The City of Ridgefield adopted the International Building Code as its building code, which includes provisions ensuring accessibility for people with disabilities. The City also uses the Americans with Disabilities Act Guidelines for Building and Facilities and the ADA Standards for Accessible Design in the design and construction of its facility improvements and construction projects.

Public Streets and Curb Ramps. It has been a priority for the City to improve accessibility for pedestrians and the disabled through the extension of an accessible sidewalk network.

An ADA Curb Ramp Inventory was completed in 2016. This inventory compiled data to create a database and mapping tool to develop a project needs list and project prioritization. For each intersection, data was collected showing whether or not there were any existing curb ramps, and whether or not existing curb ramps met ADA standards, including slope, lip, ramp width and landing area. This data allowed the City to create a list of missing curb ramps and a list identifying what elements of existing curb ramps were out of compliance. The City is in the process of creating and/or fixing curb ramps.

Maintenance. Because the City does not have the staff or resources to monitor the condition of all its facilities, roadways and parks on a continual basis, it relies on reports from citizens to facilitate its maintenance efforts. In 2017 the city implemented a system that allows citizens to report issues on its website or from a mobile phone. Priority is given to maintenance needs that impact safety and accessibility.