

ADA Background

The Americans with Disabilities Act was adopted in 1990 to ensure that people with disabilities have an equal opportunity to participate in civic life. Title II of the ADA requires state and local governments to make their programs, services, and physical facilities accessible to people with disabilities. The US Department of Justice (DOJ), which administers the ADA, issued the first formal guidelines on ADA compliance in 1991 and updated the guidelines in 2010.

Per the latest guidelines, local governments, including the Town of Manlius, are required to address accessibility issues that do not cause “undue financial or administrative burdens” (ADA Checklist, 1). The DOJ assesses burdens on a case-by-case basis considering the resources available to communities, and there is no specific dollar threshold. In this report, we have treated changes costing less than \$20,000 individually and less than \$80,000 collectively as likely to be considered below the undue burden threshold. In the discussion below, we will refer to accommodations below this threshold, and that would be likely to serve a significant number of town residents (now or in the future as the population ages) or potential future employees, as “must address” items. Accommodations that are more expensive, or would serve fewer people, or for which there are acceptable but less convenient workarounds, we refer to as “should address” items.

Accessibility Concerns: Town Hall

Legally Required

Door Handles: Door handles should be usable without twisting, pinching or squeezing of the wrist (ADA Checklist, 16). The current door handles are doorknobs which do not meet this requirement. To address this issue, the building’s doorknobs should be replaced with accessible handles or automatic door openers.

Accessible signage: Signs for rooms that are unlikely to shift over time should have text characters that contrast with their backgrounds and include Braille to be accessible for people with visual impairments (ADA Checklist, 15). Currently there are no signs in the Town Hall that include Braille. To resolve this issue, existing signs should be replaced with signs that include Braille and have text colors that contrast with the sign background. Signs should be installed in all commonly used areas where the room purpose remains consistent.

Should Address

Service Counter Height- The service counter should be a maximum of 36 inches tall and at least at one section of the counter should be at least 36 inches wide (ADA Checklist, 28). The current service counter is much taller than 36 inches and is thus not accessible by wheelchair. To address this issue, one solution would be to lower the service counter height. If the counter width is narrower than 36 inches, it should be replaced with a surface at least 36 inches wide.

Elevator or lift- Beginning with the creation of ADA in 1990, accessibility requirements mandated access to full-size elevators for new buildings over 3,000 square feet (ADA Checklist, 5; Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, As Amended, Section 1283). While the Town Hall was built before 1990 and is exempt from these elevator requirements, the lack of an elevator requires visitors and staff to use the stairs, or to exit the building and walk up or down the road around the building to access the other entrance. For individuals who do not have access to a car, there is no accessible way to walk around the building to use the entrance on the other level. To address this, the Town should install an elevator with a swinging door that is at least 36 inches wide and 54 inches deep, with a minimum of 16 square feet of clear floor area (ADA Checklist, 11).

Hallways and walkways: Current ADA regulations require building routes to be at least 36 inches wide to accommodate wheelchairs (ADA Checklist, 3). There are numerous areas in the Town Hall that are not wide enough for wheelchairs and are not wide enough for someone with accessibility challenges to reasonably turn around. To address these issues, the existing building would require significant renovations. Alternatively, the Town could build a new facility or find an existing facility with routes at least 36 inches wide.

Automatic doors- Doors should be able to be opened with ease and require less than five pounds of force to open (ADA Checklist, 19). Automatic openers should be a priority on high-traffic doors. Currently the exterior Town Hall doors are automatic and satisfy this goal. Areas where automatic openers should be installed include the restroom doors.

Accessibility Concerns: Police Station

Legally Required

Entrance Doors: The entrance door must be at least 32 inches wide when the door is open at 90 degrees (ADA Checklist, 15). The current entrance doors are not wide enough for a wheelchair and one of the double doors does not currently open. To address these issues, the Town must fix the broken double door in the entrance. Moreover, it should also install an automatic door opener.

Entrances to the Holding Cells through the Front and the Garage: At least one entrance on each level of the building needs to be accessible without the use of stairs (ADA Checklist, 3, 10). Currently the entrance to the holding cells and the entrance from the garage are not accessible without requiring the use of stairs. As a result, officers have to carry people into the building who are unable to use the stairs. To address this issue, the Town should ask the Village of Manlius to install two ramps: one leading to the front door entrance of the holding cells and another from the garage entrance. Each ramp should be at least 36 inches wide and adhere to the ADA ramp slope requirements.

Should Address

Garage ceiling height: To help prevent muscle strain and other workplace injuries for personnel maintaining police vehicles, the Police Station garage ceiling height needs to be tall enough that the lift can reach its maximum height. The current height of the garage ceiling is too low to allow access to the center of the car, contributing muscle strain in cramped conditions, and limiting the repairs that can be made in the Police Station. To address, the Police Department should build or find a garage space with sufficient clearance for the lift's maximum height.

Flooring: The current Police Station flooring contains asbestos tile, some of which is cracked or not fully intact. Asbestos tile poses significant short-term and long-term human health risks including lung disease and cancer (Public Health Statement for Asbestos, 2016). People who work in the building are vulnerable to health risks caused by asbestos exposure. To eliminate these risks, the Town must replace the asbestos tile flooring or relocate to a building free from asbestos.

Toilets: The current Police Station toilets are shorter and child-sized, when they should be adult-sized. Additionally, the shorter toilets require deeper squatting and bending of the knees than an adult-sized toilet. For individuals with knee issues, the additional squatting required may cause knee pain or strain, especially if toilet users use improper squatting form (Hinge Health, 2026). To avoid the risk of creating more knee pain or strain from deeper bending, child-sized toilets should be replaced with taller, adult-sized toilets.

External storage: Currently longer-term document storage and some equipment storage is located in exterior sheds that are not climate-controlled. These sheds are inaccessible to current or future employees with accessibility needs. Additionally, some document storage is co-located with explosives, which is both dangerous and a potential liability concern. The absence of accessible and climate controlled external storage, combined with the presence of explosives in a lightly protected shed, creates a range of problems that need to be addressed. To resolve them, the Town must ask the Village to expand its internal storage space.

Hallways and walkways: Current ADA regulations require building routes to be at least 36 inches wide to accommodate wheelchairs (ADA Checklist, 3). There are numerous areas in the Police Station that are not wide enough for wheelchairs, especially in the space with the holding cells, and are not wide enough for someone with accessibility challenges to reasonably turn around. To address these issues, the existing building would require significant renovations. Alternatively, the Town could build a new facility or find an existing facility with routes at least 36 inches wide.

Accessible signage: Signs for rooms that are unlikely to shift over time should have text characters that contrast with their backgrounds and include Braille to be accessible for people with visual impairments (ADA Checklist, 15). Currently there are no signs in the Police Station that include Braille.

References:

ADA Checklist for Existing Facilities. (2016). Institute for Human Centered Design; ADA National Network. <https://adachecklist.org/sites/default/files/documents/ada-checklist.pdf>

Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry | Division of Toxicology and Human Health Sciences. (2016, March 29). *Asbestos | Public Health Statement | ATSDR*. Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry. <https://wwwn.cdc.gov/tsp/PHS/PHS.aspx?phsid=28&toxid=4>

Hinge Health. (2026, April 9). *Knee Pain When Squatting? Causes & Exercises That Can Help*. Hinge Health. <https://www.hingehealth.com/resources/articles/knee-pain-when-squatting/>

U.S. Department of Justice | Civil Rights Division. (1990). *Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, As Amended*. ADA.Gov. <https://www.ada.gov/law-and-regs/ada/>