

City of Cambridge
Commission for Persons with Disabilities
51 Inman Street · Cambridge, MA · 02139-1732
617-349-4692 voice · 492-0235 tty · 349-4766 fax



Michael Muehe
Executive Director/ADA Coordinator

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Disability Project Coordinator

August 2008

Dear Cambridge Business Owner:

On March 3, 2008, the Cambridge City Council unanimously passed an amendment to the City's Human Rights Ordinance, requiring places of public accommodation to remove structural barriers that impede access by people with disabilities, when it is readily achievable to do so (the "Ordinance Amendment").¹ Examples of such barriers include narrow entry doorways, one step entrances without ramps, checkout counters that are too high and parking lots without designated accessible parking spaces. Pursuant to the Ordinance Amendment, "readily achievable" means easily accomplishable, and able to be done without much difficulty or expense. A business that provides goods and services to the public is considered to be a place of public accommodation.

The Ordinance Amendment mirrors existing federal law requirements as set forth in Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (the "ADA"). Under the ADA, businesses that provide goods and services to the public are already required to remove structural barriers to access by people with disabilities when removal is readily achievable. The Ordinance Amendment authorizes the Cambridge Human Rights Commission to investigate an allegation that a place of public accommodation has failed to take action to remove a readily achievable structural barrier to access.

Some Cambridge businesses may be eligible for tax benefits and/or financial assistance to help pay for the cost of removing accessibility barriers. The Cambridge Community Development Department has a Façade Improvement Program which can provide matching grants of up to \$35,000 to independent Cambridge businesses for storefront improvements, including barrier removal. The Internal Revenue Code, as amended in 1990, may allow a deduction of up to \$15,000 per year for expenses associated with the removal of qualified architectural and transportation barriers and may permit eligible small businesses to receive a tax credit for certain costs of compliance with the ADA. Qualifying businesses may claim a credit of up to fifty percent (50%) of eligible access expenditures that exceed \$250 but do not exceed \$10,250. For more information, see the "Information Resources List" attached to this letter.

¹ Ordinance Number 1314 amends Chapter 2.76 of the Cambridge Municipal Code entitled Human Rights Commission by adding Section 2.76.120 M. A copy of the Ordinance Amendment is attached.



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The U.S. Department of Justice has produced a document entitled “Common Questions: Readily Achievable Barrier Removal”, www.ada.gov/adata1.pdf, which contains additional information about the ADA's readily achievable barrier removal requirement and the potential tax benefit described above.

Thank you for your attention to this letter, and for your willingness to identify and remove barriers to access for your customers (and potential customers) with disabilities. If you have any questions or need any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Best regards,

Michael Muehe
Executive Director/ADA Coordinator

Enclosures

Information Resources List

For more information about the Cambridge Human Rights Ordinance (CHRO), contact:

**Cambridge Commission for
Persons with Disabilities**

(617) 349-4692 (Voice)

(617) 492-0235 (TTY)

www.cambridgema.gov/DHSP2/disabilities.cfm

Cambridge Human Rights Commission

(617) 349-4396 (Voice)

(617) 492-0235 (TTY)

www.cambridgema.gov/HRC

For more information about the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), contact:

New England ADA Center

Adaptive Environments Center

(800) 949-4232 (Voice/TTY)

www.adaptiveenvironments.org/neada

U.S. Department of Justice

ADA Information Line

(800) 514-0301 (Voice)

(800) 514-0383 (TTY)

www.ada.gov

**For more information about the Cambridge Façade Improvement Program, and
about federal IRS Tax Credits and Deductions for barrier removal, contact:**

**Cambridge Community
Development Department**

Façade Improvement Program

(617) 349-4601 (Voice)

(617) 349-4621 (TTY)

www.cambridgema.gov/cdd/ed/cr/cr_facade.html

U.S. Internal Revenue Service

(800) 829-1040 (Voice)

(800) 829-4059 (TTY)

www.irs.gov

**For information about Massachusetts Architectural Access Board (MAAB) regulations,
contact:**

Massachusetts Architectural Access Board

(617) 727-0660 (Voice)

(617) 727-0019 (TTY)

www.mass.gov/AAB

For information about ADA & employment issues, contact:

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

(800) 669-4000 (Voice)

(800) 669-6820 (TTY)

www.eeoc.gov

New England ADA Center

Adaptive Environments Center

(800) 949-4232 (Voice/TTY)

www.adaptiveenvironments.org/neada