Town of West Hartford

Part A – Executive Summary

October 2026







Prepared by the

Institute for Human Centered Design

560 Harrison Avenue, Unit 401
Boston, MA 02118
617.695.1225 voice/tty
www.IHCDesign.org

Introduction

The Institute for Human Centered Design (IHCD) has prepared this report on behalf of the Town of West Hartford as part of the Town's ongoing effort to assess the current level of Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance in programs, services and activities and Town-owned facilities. The ADA is the most important single piece of civil rights legislation related to the equal treatment of people with disabilities.

In preparing for this report, an IHCD team surveyed the Town's portfolio of municipal buildings, and outdoor areas that were discussed with the Town. The facility survey set includes eleven (11) municipal facilities, eight (8) active parks, five (5) passive parks, and two (2) golf courses.

At each of the municipal buildings and outdoor areas, the accessibility survey includes all the spaces where the Town offers programs, services, and activities to members of the public. Municipal buildings and outdoor areas surveyed include the following:

Municipal Facilities
Arapahoe Surface Lot
Bishops Corner Library and Senior Center
Cornerstone Aquatics Center
Isham Garage
West Hartford Public Library, Noah Webster Branch
Memorial Garage
Noah Webster House
Police/Fire Department
Public Works/Plant & Facilities at Brixton Street
Town Hall
Veterans Rink

Active Parks
Beachland Park
Eisenhower Park
Fairview Cemetery
Fernridge Park
Glover Soccer Complex
Kennedy Park
Westmoor Park

Wolcott Park

Passive Parks
Norfeldt Field and Parking Lot
Southwood Park
Spicebush Swamp Park
Vanderbilt Park
Veteran's Memorial Park

Golf Courses
Buena Vista Golf Course
Rockledge Golf Course and Rockledge Grille

IHCD also prepared a website accessibility report for the Town.

Regarding the facility set, IHCD has submitted separate narrative reports for each building and each outdoor area that was surveyed. To assist in prioritizing accessibility improvements necessary to ensure compliance with Title II of the ADA, each of the narrative reports includes an overview that identifies the most substantial accessibility issues. Additionally, a detailed survey catalog that supplements the ADA Self-Evaluation narrative overview is also included. The survey catalog provides element-by-element photos of compliance issues, location information, and measurements (when applicable) at each assessed location accompanied by recommendations.

In addition, a set of spreadsheets detailing priorities for corrective action organized by survey location was provided to the Town. Once fully updated, these spreadsheets are a planning and budgeting resource – the "ADA Transition Plan"– and are intended as a long-term tool that should be updated as work is completed. The ADA regulations do not set out precise timeframes to complete the work. IHCD recommends completing the work in a reasonable amount of time. The ADA Transition Plan is a living document that requires regular updates to keep it current. A possible funding sources for ADA improvements include the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program.

Together, the ADA Self-Evaluation and ADA Transition Plan will enable the Town to make substantial progress in meeting its ADA responsibilities. The recommendations for corrective action that apply to policies, practices, and procedures of the Town as detailed in the ADA Self-Evaluation are not included in the ADA Transition Plan since the Transition Plan spreadsheet is limited to capital expense accessibility issues. Policy, practices, and procedure

recommendations are a blueprint for meeting compliance responsibilities other than capital expenses.

Most of the Town-owned facilities that have been recently altered or renovated are substantially accessible and meet the majority of the applicable architectural requirements. Continued facility alterations and/or renovations will significantly reduce barriers and help realize the Town's commitment to inclusion and equal rights. In the meantime, the greatest problems posed by existing barriers can be ameliorated by establishing policies and procedures to accommodate members of the community with disabilities. It is worth noting that the Town has taken several significant steps in this direction including:

- The Town of West Hartford has hired a consultant (IHCD) to undertake its ADA self-evaluation (as the basis for the Town's Transition Plan).
- The Town of West Hartford has a Grievance Procedure, which was shared with IHCD. There is also a link to a complaint form for members of the public and for employees on the Town's website.
- The Town has met its obligation to designate a responsible employee as the Town's ADA Coordinator.

IHCD's review and recommendations for Town-owned facilities is based on compliance with the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design if an element or elements are not compliant with the 1991 ADA Standards and/or the Connecticut State Building Code. Best practice and inclusive design recommendations are also provided for most properties. Best practice and inclusive design recommendations include elements that are *not* required in the accessibility standards but may create enhanced experiences for all users.

Some key facilities are generally usable by people with disabilities but are not in full compliance with current accessibility requirements. West Hartford's Town Hall, for instance, provides access to many programs and can be accessed by most people because the building features a largely accessible main entrance and two (2) elevators. However, there is a lack of an assistive listening system in the auditorium, Town Council Chambers, and public meeting room. Additionally, many doors lack maneuvering clearance and stairs lack compliant handrails.

The Bishops Corner Library is another example of a facility that provides access to many programs. The library has a largely accessible entrance. Yet accessibility issues include a lack of

compliant egress signage, a lack of compliant work surfaces in many locations, and a lack of an assistive listening system in the story room.

The Town may comply with the requirements of Title II of the ADA through means such as reassignment of programs or services or delivery of services at alternate accessible sites. The Town may also comply with the requirements by renovation or alteration of existing facilities and/or construction of new facilities, or any other methods that result in making the Town's programs, services, or activities readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities. Note that a public entity is not required to make structural changes in existing facilities where other methods are effective in achieving compliance with its ADA Title II obligations.

In choosing among available methods for meeting the requirements of the ADA, the Town of West Hartford should give priority to those methods that offer programs, services, and activities to qualified individuals with disabilities in the most integrated setting appropriate.

In order to comply with ADA Title II program accessibility obligations, the Town of West Hartford should consider:

1. Relocation of programs, services, and activities to an accessible location within a current facility.

2. Relocation of programs, services, and activities to an accessible location in another facility.

   When it is not possible to relocate them to an accessible location within the current facility, programs, services, and activities should be relocated to an accessible facility.

3. Renovation/alteration of existing Town facilities or the provision of new accessible facilities to ensure access to programs, services, and activities.

   The Town may consider the renovation of its existing facilities or the provision of new accessible facilities to ensure that programs, services, and activities are offered in the most integrated setting appropriate.

Note that any corrective actions needed to ensure program accessibility must comply with the most current requirements of the ADA Standards and/or Connecticut State Building Code at the time when the corrective actions take place.

Furthermore, when completing alterations/renovations, keep in mind that an alteration that

decreases the accessibility of a building below the requirements for new construction at the time of the alteration is prohibited.

To determine which buildings must be made accessible, the Town should consider:

- How to provide the program in the most integrated setting appropriate;
- The locations where the activities are offered;
- Which facilities are accessible and to what extent.

Key Recommendations for Municipal Buildings:

- Ensure there is at least one accessible route from site arrival points within the site from accessible parking spaces and accessible passenger loading zones; public streets and sidewalks; and public transportation stops to the accessible building or facility entrance they serve.
- If parking is provided, ensure fully accessible parking spaces are provided in the correct manner, number and location. There are present properties that require attention.
- Ensure that fully accessible toilet rooms are provided in each building that has a toilet room or toilet rooms available for use by members of the public.
- Ensure that where programs, services, or activities are offered that there is a sufficient number of accessible features (accessible counters, accessible work surfaces, etc.).

  Note: Particular attention should be given to facilities where key services are being offered to many members of the community like Town Hall or the West Hartford Public Library facilities.
- Ensure that accurate designation signs with raised characters and braille are provided at all permanent rooms and spaces. Ensure that maintenance staff are aware that designation and egress signs containing tactile characters should be located so that a clear floor space of 18” min. by 18” min., centered on the tactile characters, is provided beyond the arc of any door swing between the closed position and the 45-degree open position. No items should be stored or mounted under or above these signs.
- If audible communication is integral to the use of a space, a compliant assistive listening system should be provided. If an assistive listening system is provided, a sign with the

International Symbol of Access for Hearing Loss must also be posted on premises so visitors can know that an assistive listening system is available.

- Ensure that those features of facilities and equipment that are required to be readily accessible to and usable by persons with disabilities are maintained in operable working condition (e.g., elevators or automatic door openers, assistive listening systems).

- Ensure that door opening pressure is monitored at all facilities and kept in compliance at all doors by maintenance staff at an appropriate interval. Ensure that maintenance staff is aware that the maneuvering clearance at doors should be kept clear at all times.

Below are recommendations regarding the most common signage accessibility issues.

1. Inaccessible entrances and exits should have directional signs indicating the location of the nearest accessible entrances/exits.

2. When not all entrances are accessible, accessible entrances should have signage containing the International Symbol of Accessibility (ISA).

3. Inaccessible toilet rooms should have directional signs indicating the location of the nearest accessible toilet room.

4. When not all toilet rooms in a facility are accessible, accessible toilet rooms should have signage containing International Symbol of Accessibility (ISA).

Key Recommendations for Outdoor Areas:

- Ensure there is an accessible route to all elements in the parks/outdoor areas (playgrounds, picnic areas, fields, kiosks, etc.). For example, there is a lack of an accessible route to athletic courts and fields at Wolcott Park.

- Ensure that accessible routes are provided to and around playgrounds; in addition, ensure that an impact-attenuating accessible route is provided in the play area to, under, and around each unique play component. Play areas at Southwood Park lack accessible routes to the playground and to each unique play component.

- Provide an accessible route to at least one (1) bench in each distinct area of each park where benches are provided.

- Ensure that at least one (1) picnic table, trash container and other similar amenity (in each distinct area of a park where these amenities are provided) is accessible and is located on an accessible route.

- Ensure that the Town offers some accessible trails (such as those in Westmoor Park and Spicebush Swamp Park) and that these trails comply with the United States Access Board Accessibility Standards for Federal Outdoor Developed Areas (https://www.access-board.gov/files/aba/guides/outdoor-guide.pdf). A policy should also be established to check and maintain accessible trails at regular intervals throughout the year, removing, for example, fallen trees in the accessible route or addressing areas that may get washed out by rain storms.