



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT Retail Interior Accessibility Program Guidelines

INTRODUCTION

The City of Cambridge Community Development Department (CDD) established the Retail Interior Accessibility Program to provide financial assistance to independent business tenants seeking to renovate or improve the interior of their commercial buildings to make their businesses more accessible to those who are physically disabled. The Program’s objectives are to improve accessibility and physical appearance of independent businesses and make Cambridge businesses more accessible to all.

The Program will provide financial assistance to Cambridge businesses interested in improving their interior accessibility in conformance with American with Disabilities Acts (ADA) and the Massachusetts Architectural Access Board (MAAB) standards, such as path of travel inside the business, new counters, tables, doors, menus, and bathrooms. This new program will further assist our ground floor businesses in making certain their facilities meet the needs of all their customers.

Program Improvements can include, but are not limited to:

- Braille menus
- Accessible bathrooms
- Improving aisles in store
- Accessible dining tables
- Interior store ramps
- Accessible shelving and counters

The Program will provide a 90% matching grant up to \$10,000 for improvements that comply with ADA and MAAB guidelines. Improvements costing less than \$2,000 will receive 100% reimbursement.

Program grants will vary based on scope of work and available funds. Grants will vary each year so contact CDD for further information.

Applicants will be responsible to hire licensed architects and contractors to refine this conceptual design depending on the scope of work.

Improvements made prior to a signed improvement contract will not be funded.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The following criteria must be met for participation in the Program:

1. Applicants must be property owners or commercial tenants whose storefronts face onto a Cambridge street;

2. Preference will be given to independent businesses not required by contractual arrangement to maintain standardized décor, architecture, signs or similar features.
3. Storefront must have least one accessible entry and exit way at time of program approval;
4. Tenants must have written approval from property owners to participate in program;
5. Property owners must be up to date on all municipal taxes prior to participation in the program;
6. Applicants must comply with all state and local laws and regulations pertaining to licensing, permits, building code and zoning requirements.

The City of Cambridge reserves the right to apply additional criteria before accepting project if program demand exceeds budgeted resources.

DESIGN PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES

As a retail business, you need to comply with both state and federal accessibility requirements. The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) is a federal law which includes standards for accessible design, to ensure that businesses are accessible to individuals with disabilities. The Massachusetts Architectural Access Board (MAAB) is state agency that has its own accessibility regulations. While MAAB and ADA accessibility standards are similar in many respects, there are some differences.

Please make sure to review the Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities fact sheets, ADA and MAAB's codes to make sure improvements are following the correct guidelines.

A. Eligible Improvements

The following improvements are encouraged:

1. Accessible route on private property for retail use (i.e. interior push buttons, interior ramps, larger aisles, etc.)
2. Accessible doors (i.e., interior automatic door openers, chimes, ADA-compliant hardware, etc.)
3. Accessible check out , condiment areas, and tables (i.e. minimum 27" table clearances, 34-36" counters) ;
4. Accessible bathrooms – this could be upgrading or construction of a new bathroom, or getting new hardware for a current bathroom (i.e. new handles, new sink)
5. Accessible dressing rooms;
6. Installation of a text telephone TTY line or counter loop at checkout area
7. Braille menus (i.e. restaurant menu or menu of services);
8. Accessible shelving units;
9. Other approved items (i.e. painting, cleaning, repainting, etc.) necessary to achieve the overall improvement.

For examples of barrier removal, please see “The Americans with Disabilities Act Checklist for Readily Achievable Barrier Removals” at <http://www.ada.gov/rachek.pdf> and “ADA Guide for Small Businesses” at <http://www.ada.gov/smbusgd.pdf>.

B. Prior Improvements

Alterations and improvements made prior to receiving a signed reimbursement contract or a “Notice to Proceed with Improvements” are not eligible for reimbursement.

C. Alterations

The applicant must agree not to change or alter the improved facade without prior written approval from CDD for two (2) years from the date of the rebate check issued under the Retail Interior Accessibility Program.

PROGRAM ASSISTANCE

A. Financial Assistance

Funding offered is a matching grant in which the City would reimburse the applicant ninety percent (90%) for accessible storefront improvements, up to \$10,000.00. Any projects requesting reimbursement must have accessible access from the street. The Program will only reimburse applicants after the applicant has paid his/her architect, contractor and vendor(s) in full and after the project is determined to have been completed in accordance with the contract between the City and applicant.

Grant levels are determined at the beginning of the fiscal year based on program funding and vary from year to year. Please contact Christina DiLisio at (617) 349-4601 or cdilisio@cambridgema.gov for information on available funds and reimbursement grant limits.

B. Technical Assistance

Program staff can provide guidance on interior accessibility improvements specific to individual businesses. The applicant will have a choice of hiring his/her own licensed architect to work on the project from start to completion. **Early meetings with Program staff are necessary in order to help avoid misunderstanding as to the eligibility of proposals.**

C. Application and Information

If you wish to participate in the Retail Interior Accessibility Program, please contact Christina DiLisio at CDD, (617) 349-4601 (voice) or 617-349-4621 (TTY), or e-mail at cdilisio@cambridgema.gov. The City of Cambridge will provide auxiliary aids and services, written materials in alternative formats, and reasonable modifications in policies and procedures to persons with disabilities upon request.

PROCEDURES

All prospective applicants must follow the procedures in the order outlined below.

1. Applicant meets with Program staff for initial project discussion and files an application. Additional meetings with Program staff may be necessary to discuss building program and design alternatives, depending on proposed scope of work.
2. Program architect prepares and submits conceptual designs and budget estimates to applicant and Program staff for review (when applicable). A meeting will be set up to discuss these plans.
3. If necessary, Applicant's architect prepares final design drawings and submits them to Program staff for review and final approval.
4. Upon approval of final designs by Program's Design Review Committee, the Applicant has thirty (30) days to solicit two written bids from the contractors necessary to complete the improvement scope of work. **Bids from each contractor must be itemized so that a cost is associated with each task or material to be installed.** (Copy the Program on all solicitations for bids.)
5. Upon approval of submitted bids by Program staff, the Applicant will enter into a contract for reimbursement with the City of Cambridge. The maximum funding amount indicated on the contract will be based upon the lowest bid for proposed improvement project and program grant limits.
6. A pre-construction meeting takes place between the Applicant, Program staff, selected contractor, and project architect.
7. Program staff sends applicant a "Notice to Proceed with Improvements" or signed contract. **Any work completed prior to receiving the "Notice to Proceed with Improvements" written note or signed contract will not be reimbursed.**
8. Applicant has sixty (60) days from the execution date of the contract to begin implementation of approved improvements. Applicant must provide Program staff with copies of all building permits and certifications received for improvement project.
9. Contractor constructs project improvements as specified in the final design. Any changes previously agreed upon and contracted must have prior approval of Program staff. It is up to the applicant to notify the Program of these changes in writing.
10. Applicant notifies the Program staff once project is completed.
11. Architect and/or Program staff certifies that the improvements comply with the final drawings and specifications.
12. The architect and/or contractor(s) must submit letters to the Program staff acknowledging full payment by the applicant. The applicant must submit to the CDD copies of all paid invoices and copies of cancelled checks or credit card statements;
13. Program staff submits invoices for City of Cambridge to issue rebate check.

Any permanent construction or substantial rehabilitation work that exceeds \$2,000 is subject to the Davis-Bacon and Related Acts (DBRA) under HUD guidelines. DBRA mandates that all workers on the job are paid a locally determined prevailing wage as established by the U.S. Department of Labor. The City is obligated to verify that all DBRA requirements are satisfied.

The Interior Accessibility Program reserves the right to make adjustments regarding conditions and parameters outlined in these guidelines.

TERMINATION

The City of Cambridge has the right to terminate any agreement under the Interior Accessibility Program if a participant is found to be in violation of any conditions set forth in these guidelines or if the project has been started prior to an executed agreement with the City of Cambridge.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Visit the Cambridge Community Development Department website for a full list of information about additional business development resources: www.cambridgema.gov/business

SMALL BUSINESS ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM

The Small Business Enhancement (SBE) Program reaches out to Cambridge retailers and restaurant owners seeking to improve their establishments' interior appearance, marketing, advertising, and operations through consultations and grant assistance. A business must meet eligibility requirements to participate in individual in-store consultations and the grant program. The Program's goal is to assist business owners with technical and financial assistance to build a stronger customer base and boost sales.

For more information on eligibility requirements for the SBE Program, please contact Pardis Saffari at 617/349-4654 or via email at psaffari@cambridgema.gov.

STOREFRONT IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

The Storefront Improvement Program provides financial assistance to property owners or tenants seeking to renovate or restore commercial building exterior facades. The programs seek to increase accessibility into storefronts, improve the physical appearance of independent businesses and enhance the commercial districts of Cambridge. The program provides matching reimbursement grants that range from \$2,500-\$35,000 based on scope of work, including a 90% matching grant up to \$20,000 for improvements to an entrance that complies with the ADA and the MAAB guidelines, including ramps, lifts, door hardware and automatic openers, accessible parking, and signage.

For more information on the Storefront Improvement Program, please contact Christina DiLisio in the Economic Development Division at 617/349-4601 or cdilisio@cambridgema.gov.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOPS

The Economic Development Division works with local organizations to provide business development programs and services to Cambridge residents, entrepreneurs, and businesses. The Economic Development Division maintains a calendar of educational workshops on our website or contact Rona Abrahams at rabrahams@cambridgema.gov or 617/349-4637 for more information.

THE CAMBRIDGE ENERGY ALLIANCE

The Cambridge Energy Alliance is a city-sponsored nonprofit group created to save you money on utility bills and maintenance expenses, while reducing Cambridge's carbon footprint and creating jobs in the city. The innovative CEA program offers practical solutions that will lead to comprehensive results. For more information about the CEA, please visit the Cambridge Energy Alliance web site at <http://www.cambridgeenergyalliance.org>

DISABLED ACCESS TAX CREDIT

The 1990 Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act created a federal income tax credit for small businesses to help offset the costs of modifying buildings in order to comply with the accessibility requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The credit will cover 50% of eligible cost that exceed \$250, but do not exceed \$10,250. An eligible small business is one whose gross receipts do not exceed \$1,000,000 or whose workforce does not consist of more than 30 full-time workers. Examples of eligible access expenditures include the necessary and reasonable cost of removing barriers, providing auxiliary aids, and acquiring or modifying equipment or devices.

The Internal Revenue Code also allows a deduction of up to \$15,000 per year for expenses associated with the removal of qualified architectural and transportation barriers.

For further information contact the Internal Revenue Service by visiting their website at www.irs.gov or by calling (800) 829-4933. Additional information can be found by visiting the American with Disabilities Act website at www.ada.gov or calling the ADA Information Line at (800) 514-0301 or TTY (800) 514-0383.