

Accessible Apartment Building Guide

A consumer's guide
for using
Westchester
County's accessible buildings



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Disclaimer

WRO has made reasonable efforts to compile this information. However, WRO makes no representations or warranties, express or implied, as to the accuracy or completeness of the information set forth herein.

Summary

This guide was prepared by Westchester Residential Opportunities, Inc. (WRO) in cooperation with the Westchester County Department of Planning. More than 700 multi-family housing dwellings were surveyed to determine the degree of accessibility for individuals with mobility impairments. A computer database was created from the survey results. The 1988 Fair Housing Act Amendments (FHAA), the Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards (UFAS), and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) were used as guides in conducting the survey.



The Accessible Apartment Building Guide and database will help disabled persons find housing that is accessible in Westchester County. As additional information is gathered, it will be added to the database.

The purpose of this guide is to:

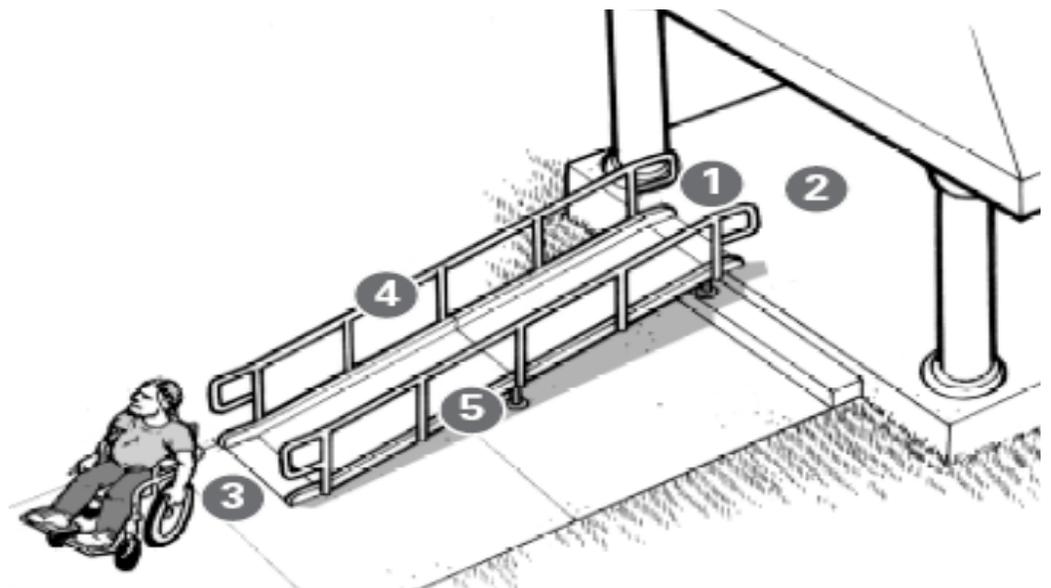
- Help persons in need of accessible housing locate and correctly interpret the survey data,
- Better understand fair housing laws and
- Locate the resources needed if additional improvements are required to make housing accessible.

The guide is divided into five sections:

1. Summary
2. The Rating Scale and What It Means
3. Locating and Using the Database
4. Fair Housing Laws and Accessibility
5. Resources for Making Housing More Accessible

This guide is not intended to enforce accessibility laws. All individuals who require mobility access can benefit from the survey findings as a means of identifying buildings that may potentially meet their access needs.

Buildings of 20 or more rental units were targeted. However a few co-ops and condominiums were included, as well as some smaller buildings. The exterior access route, the building entrance and the common areas of each building in the survey were examined. Common areas included the lobby, mailboxes, trash disposal area, and parking, or garage, if available. Individual living units were not examined or rated, nor were vacancies identified.



Accessible Ramp Features

The slope of a ramp should be 1:12 or 5° to be user friendly.

THE RATING SCALE AND WHAT IT MEANS

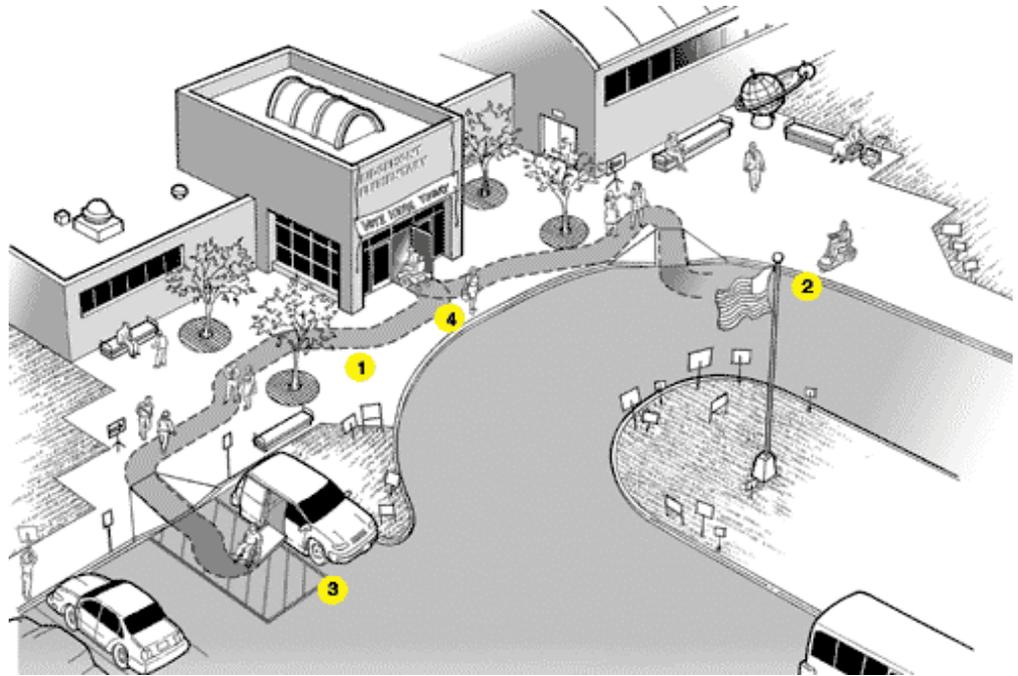
The EXTERIOR ACCESS ROUTE, the BUILDING ENTRANCE and the COMMON AREAS of each building in the survey were examined. Common areas included the lobby, mailboxes, trash disposal area, and parking or garage, if provided. Individual living units were not examined or rated.

The ratings use the following scale:

GOOD	The exterior access route, building entrance, and common areas are accessible to persons with mobility impairments, including wheelchair users.
ADEQUATE	The main entrance is accessible, but the exterior access route and/or common areas may have barriers. Wheelchair users can enter the building, but may encounter access problems elsewhere in the building depending on the degree of disability.
LIMITED	The main entrance is not accessible due to a minor barrier (i.e. one or two steps). Someone with walking limitations may find the building manageable.
NO ACCESS	The main entrance is inaccessible and would require major modification for accessibility (i.e. ramping 3 or more steps). The building may also have additional barriers in common areas and/or on the exterior access route.

The rating assigned to a building indicates overall accessibility of the building, not of each living unit within the building. For example, a non-elevator building may be rated “Good access” with access to ground floor units, but upstairs units are inaccessible because of stairs. Likewise, some buildings rated “Limited “ or “No access” have garden apartments or ground floor units with separate accessible entrances. The profile page of a building contains all of these details.

The graduated scale is helpful to consumers because different disabilities require varying degrees of access. Housing with minor barriers is a good alternative for some disabled persons. Also, by identifying how much access a building offers, the ratings will help consumers determine what might be available if minor renovations were made. [See Fair Housing Law section for discussion of reasonable modification and reasonable accommodation]



An exterior of a building showing the accessible route from the accessible entrance to the accessible parking and an accessible drop-off area.

NOTICE: This accessible apartment building guide and database are not a complete listing of all buildings in Westchester County. Persons seeking accessible housing are advised not to limit their search to the buildings contained herein.

USING THE DATABASE

The database contains a **listing** by community of all buildings surveyed. Each building appears as a separate line item in the database with identifying information such as address and access rating. Each building has its own **profile page** showing all access details, including the surveyor's comments.

To use the database, scan the list of buildings in a specific community to locate housing that appears to meet individual needs. Then view the more detailed **profile pages** to determine whether a building is a suitable match.

LOCATING THE GUIDE AND DATABASE ON-LINE

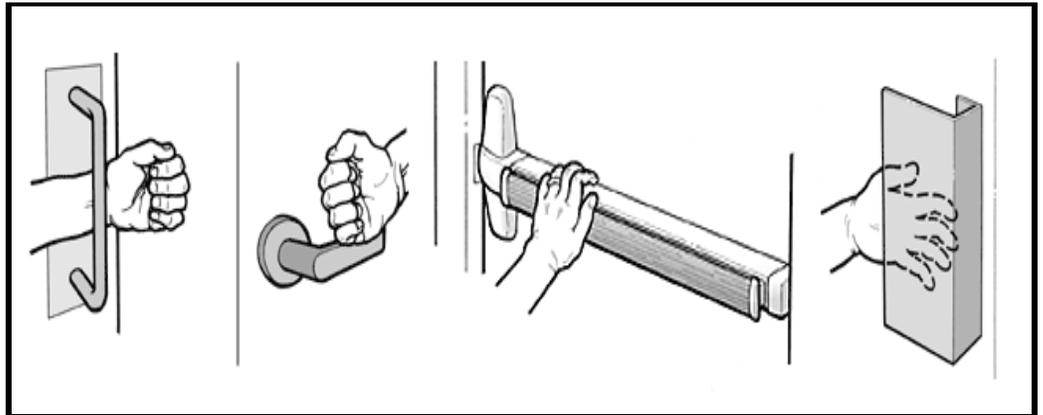
The Guide and Database are located at the County website:

<http://www.westchestergov.com/planning/housing>

OBTAINING A PAPER COPY OF THE GUIDE AND DATABASE

A copy of the guide and database in print can be obtained by calling the Westchester County Department of Planning, Housing Section 914 995-2404 or 914 995-2413.

Examples of door hardware that can be used



without tight grasping, pinching, or twisting

FAIR HOUSING LAW AND ACCESSIBILITY

If a house or apartment does not meet the needs of the people living in it, it never quite becomes a home. Accessible housing enables people with disabilities to live their lives as independently as possible. When a building was constructed (before or after accessibility laws were implemented), and whether or not it was constructed in a manner that is readily adaptable, are two issues that must be considered when seeking accessible housing.

The Fair Housing Law was enacted to help ensure that all people would be able to access housing which meets their needs. The Fair Housing Amendments of 1988-89 created a protected class for persons with disabilities.

The Amendments not only established the rights of all persons with disabilities to equal treatment. They also introduced the phrases *reasonable modification* and *reasonable accommodation* to improve the quality of life for the person with a disability and the family. The law does not require the owner or landlord to pay for modifications. It simply requires that reasonable modifications be permitted. There may be funds available to help disabled persons pay for the modifications they require. [see next section on Resources]

The amendments established March 1991 as the date when developers of new construction had to consider the needs of persons with disabilities and make housing accessible. The accessible guidelines include seven technical requirements. The requirements regarding entrances (including doors), accessible routes, common areas (including mailboxes, laundry rooms and garbage facilities) were used to rate housing for this survey.

The accessibility requirements for individual units under these amendments are not addressed in this guide or in the database.

Buildings built before March 1991 do not need to be made accessible by the landlord. However, the landlord must permit *reasonable modifications* and *reasonable accommodations* to be made by the tenant. Similarly, co-op shareholders or condominium owners cannot be refused the right to make reasonable modifications at their own expense. Note that public housing and some government subsidized buildings built before 1991 may be required to be made accessible at the landlord's expense.

The word *accommodations* relates to rules and policies which may need to be modified to improve the quality of life of the person with a disability.

ACCESSIBLE HOUSING RESOURCES

Buildings constructed before 1991, may be adaptable for persons with disabilities. Within all housing units, the Fair Housing Act Amendments require that the landlord not refuse to make reasonable accommodations in rules, policies, practices and services to enable a tenant with a disability to occupy and use a housing unit.

Further, the law requires that the renter be allowed to make reasonable modifications to the dwelling at his or her own expense to accommodate a disability.

The landlord has the right to require that such modifications be accomplished in a professional manner, that the tenant acquire all necessary permits, and that the interior premises be restored to the original state upon termination of occupancy if such restoration can be readily accomplished and if the accommodations could interfere with a future tenant's use or enjoyment of the unit.

Westchester has a variety of programs that may help with housing rehab expenses to address health and safety. These property improvement programs may be for private homes, condos, co-ops or rental housing. Programs may serve only parts of Westchester, have income eligibility restrictions, cost sharing, and may be in the form of loans or grants. There are too many variations to list here, and funding changes over time. However you may check with one of the public or private groups listed below for specific information on their services:

Westchester Access to Home – Provides grants of up to \$25,000 for renters or homeowners to make their housing more accessible. Covers a broad range of improvements including climbers, lifts, ramps, and kitchen and bathroom modifications such as lowering cabinets, widening doors and installing grab bars. Income eligibility for households is set at 50% of median, which in 2005 ranges from \$32,700 for one person to \$46,700 for 4 people. Priority will be given to those needing accessibility improvements to avoid nursing home placement or to be returned to a community setting from an institutional setting. Accessibility improvements to help disabled persons function more independently in an existing house or apartment will also be considered. Westchester Residential Opportunities (WRO) conducts this program in association with the Westchester County Department of Planning Property Improvement Program. For more information contact WRO 914 428-4507 or by email to housinghelp@wroinc.org

Westchester County Department of Planning
Property Improvement Program
148 Martine Avenue, Room 414, White Plains, New York 10601
(914) 995-2413
www.westchestergov.com

City of White Plains CDBG Property Rehabilitation Program
City Hall Annex, Main Street, White Plains, New York
(914) 422-1252

City of Mount Vernon
Department of Planning and Community Development
City Hall, Roosevelt Square, Mt. Vernon 10550
(914) 665-2300 ext. 127

New Rochelle
Neighborhood Revitalization Corporation
400 North Avenue, New Rochelle, NY 10801
(914) 633-7092

City of Yonkers Dep't of Planning and Development
Home Improvement Program
87 Nepperhan Avenue Room 312, Yonkers, NY 10701
(914) 377-6650

Family Service Society of Yonkers
Housing Accessibility Program
70 Ashburton Avenue, Yonkers, New York 10701
(914) 963-5118

Housing Action Council
55 So. Broadway, Tarrytown, New York 10591
(914) 332-5229

HDSW's Neighborhood Preservation Office
28 Adee Street, Port Chester, NY 10573
(914) 939-2005

Interfaith Council for Action (IFCA)
138 Spring Street, Ossining, New York 10562
(914) 941-5335

Washingtonville Housing Alliance
136 Library Lane, Mamaroneck, New York 10543
(914) 698-4299

The Preservation Company, Inc.
1037 Main Street, Peekskill, NY 10566
(914) 734-8795

Medicaid Waiver Programs

These programs can help pay for home modifications for accessibility. The following programs can assist individuals with specific disabilities:

* The Traumatic Brain Injury Waiver Program under Medicaid can assist individuals with Traumatic Brain Injuries including strokes. For more information about the HCBS/TBI Waiver, contact TBI Coordinator at the Westchester Independent Living Program (914) 682-3926

* The Home and Community Based Services waiver for individuals with Developmental Disabilities: Hudson Valley DDSO 220 White Plains Road, Suite 675, Tarrytown, NY 10591, (914) 332-8989

* Under certain circumstances limited funding may be available from the Long Term Home Health Care Program Waiver (the Lombardi Program). Check with your long-term care provider or contact Westchester Disabled on the Move or Westchester Independent Living Center listed below.

* For individuals who need home modifications in order to seek or keep employment the NYS VESID may also provide assistance with home modifications. Check with Westchester Disabled on the Move or Westchester Independent Living Center, listed below, for more information:

Westchester Disabled on the Move
984 North Broadway, Yonkers, 10701
(914) 968-4717

Westchester Independent Living Center
200 Hamilton Avenue, White Plains, NY 10601
(914) 682-3926

The New York State Accessible Housing Registry contains information on existing accessible rental units in New York State. For more information go to: <http://www.nysaccessiblehousing.org>



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