

Katrina ADA! Help Program

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Free accessibility advice for those
affected by Hurricane Katrina



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Got Access?

Chevron Tower ADA Issues

New Orleans, LA

July 22, 2009

Prepared by Bill Hecker, AIA Accessibility Consultant

The following executive summary report describes the key ADA issues related to the existing Chevron Office Tower at the corner of O'Keefe Avenue and Gravier Street in New Orleans. This report is not comprehensive, nor is it intended to replace a complete review of building code and ADA requirements to be made by the licensed design professionals hired to renovate this facility. A full list of the ADA barriers identified in my July 17, 2009 survey will be available in the future.

Exterior Approach Issues

1. Front door needs automatic door opener because door closer force is too heavy to allow access for many disabled users to the programs offered in this facility.
2. Gravier Street sidewalk has a steep cross slope along the pedestrian area which can and should be modified to provide a minimum 36"-48" wide accessible route alongside the existing tree planters with a 2% maximum cross slope. There is also a need for modifying the driveways at the two loading dock doors along this street to remediate the steep cross slopes created there. This sidewalk in front of the main Annex Building entrance should be raised to meet the height of the existing stoop at this door if the Annex is to house city programs and the inaccessible knob hardware at this door must be replaced. These streetscape projects would likely be considered as appropriate "beautification" measure along the pedestrian route to this building that may house central City offices.
3. O'Keefe Avenue sidewalks along the front of this building are so inaccessible (due to cross slopes) that there should not be a push to use the inaccessible northwest entrance door to the building and alternate approach routes along Gravier Street should be encouraged with the modifications I proposed done for accessibility improvements.
4. Barriers such as railings or bollards should be installed on the "curbed" sides of the two curb ramps at the intersection outside the front entrance as pedestrian traffic which crosses these "curbed" sides have an increased risk of tripping and these curb ramps are not compliant with the ADA.

Adjacent Concrete Parking Structure

1. Install 7 standard accessible parking spaces adjacent to the elevator core in this parking deck - distribute these accessible parking spaces among the various deck levels. Study the possibility of linking the existing parking deck with the main building tower by the use of a bridge and/or ramp system on an upper floor level and make this accessible connection. Alternately, if the ramp connection is not feasible, install a new elevator to link the existing connecting door lobby to either the first or second floor of the tower. It is an absolute must to provide an accessible connection between the adjacent parking structure and the Chevron tower. Provide a pair of "van accessible" parking spaces in the lowest level parking area and an accessible link to the existing first floor parking deck elevator lobby so those who drive raised top vans can also park at the building to benefit from services offered at this building.
2. Screen off the underside of the lower level exit stairs with railings to act as a cue for cane users who may use the stairs in this parking structure. Additionally, there are numerous protruding objects (e.g., fire extinguisher cabinets, etc.) that also need to be screened off to protect blind visitors.

Parking Spaces within the Office Tower

1. Paint 3 new accessible parking spaces (one of which is a "van accessible" space) adjacent to the non-freight elevator core on the third level this parking deck - this will necessitate the relocation of two suspended pipes that reduce head height along the accessible approach route from these new accessible parking spaces to the parking elevator that serves the main lobby area on the ground floor. Do not direct disabled users to the parking elevator lobby on the second level parking area as the surface slopes and cross slopes along the approach to this elevator lobby are inaccessible and not correctable.
2. Install new lever hardware on the doors serving the freight elevator lobby area in the parking deck.

Adjacent Annex Space

1. This attached two story building needs total renovation to house City programs as it is now only a vacant shell space on the lower level and a vacant restaurant on the second floor. This will require an architect to redesign the space for City use and when that is done, ADA must be taken into account fully.

Main Lobby Spaces

1. Existing service counter once inside the security gates does not include a lowered accessible portion as required by ADA. There is a lowered portion on the lobby waiting room side of the security station, but there must be a lowered portion on each side.
2. The rubber transition strip on each side of the carpeted and ramped security gates (one of which allows 36" clear passage width) must be replaced with a pair of accessible aluminum threshold ramps that have slopes no steeper than 1:12 and a leading edge no higher than $\frac{1}{4}$ ".
3. There is a wall mounted display box in the waiting room area of the Lobby that projects further than 4" into the circulation route above 27" in such a way as to be a hazard for blind visitors. This box should be screened

off for cane detectability.

4. The Men's and Women's single user restrooms near the first floor lobby area have doors that do not allow at least 32" clear passage width and must be replaced with new doors that provide the accessible width and that open outward into the adjacent corridor.

Typical Tower Office Space Barriers

1. Existing inaccessible knob style door hardware should be replaced with accessible hardware on all levels that will house programs or services made available to members of the public. One pair of upper level elevator lobby entry doors do not allow at least 32" clear passage width for one door leaf and must be replaced with new doors that do.

2. Where there are no accessible raised letter and Braille room identification signs, the inaccessible signs should be replaced on all levels that will house programs or services made available to members of the public.

3. In many of the common-use conference rooms, there are TV's mounted from brackets on the ceiling in such a way that the head height along circulation routes in the conference rooms is less than 80" and must be screened off or blocked with furniture that is cane detectable to blind users.

Public and Common-Use Restrooms at Tower Core

1. On the 13+/- floors that have not yet been or will not be renovated or altered in the future, there are Men's and Women's restrooms that have modest accessibility modifications, but are not accessible to the level required by ADA in new construction/alterations - therefore, until these restrooms are modified as required by ADA when the office space is altered, install directional signage informing users that there are accessible restrooms on the floors that have been modified to comply with ADA.

Important ADA Alterations Note

It is critically important that it be understood that the ADA regulations (28 CFR 35.151) have specific requirements for alteration projects and if the City elects to alter spaces within this Tower and its adjacent annexes, these ADA requirements must be met. This is likely to require the renovation of those core restrooms in the Tower that are not fully accessible at this time. This analysis should be made during the design process of the architect used to develop the construction documents needed for those renovations. I will be happy to assist you and your architects with technical assistance on those ADA facility compliance requirements.