

Memorandum

To: Town Council
From: Lori Wisner, Risk and ADA Manager
Date: January 13, 2026
Re: ADA Self Evaluation and Transition Plan



Purpose

The purpose of this memo is to explain what an ADA Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan is and why it is essential for the Town of Erie's legal compliance, operational effectiveness, and commitment to equitable public service.

What Is an ADA Self-Evaluation?

An ADA Self-Evaluation is a comprehensive review of a public entity's programs, services, policies, practices, employment activities, and facilities to determine whether they are accessible to individuals with disabilities, as required under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

This process identifies barriers to access—both physical and non-physical—and evaluates whether current practices provide equal opportunity for participation. It also incorporates public input, particularly from individuals with disabilities, to ensure real-world accessibility concerns are considered.

What Is an ADA Transition Plan?

A Transition Plan is developed as a result of the Self-Evaluation. It documents:

- Physical barriers in programs, facilities and the public right-of-way that limit accessibility;
- The specific actions needed to remove those barriers;
- A schedule for completing improvements; and
- The staff or departments responsible for implementation.

The Transition Plan serves as a roadmap for bringing programs, facilities and infrastructure into ADA compliance over time in a planned, transparent, and fiscally responsible manner.

Who is Required to Have an ADA Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan?

All state and local government entities with 50+ employees were required to have a self-evaluation completed by July 1992 and a transition plan completed by July 1993.

Why This Is Important

Legal Compliance

The ADA requires public entities to conduct self-evaluations and maintain transition plans when structural changes are needed. Completing and maintaining these documents reduces the Town's risk of complaints, investigations, or litigation.

Equal Access and Inclusion

The Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan help ensure that all residents, employees, and visitors—regardless of ability—can access Town programs, services, facilities, and employment opportunities.

Risk Management and Accountability

Identifying barriers and documenting corrective actions demonstrates good-faith compliance efforts, which is critical in the event of an ADA complaint or claim.

Informed Planning and Budgeting

The Transition Plan allows the Town to prioritize improvements, coordinate projects, and plan capital investments strategically rather than reacting to issues on an ad hoc basis.

Improved Public Service

Accessible facilities and inclusive practices lead to better customer service, clearer procedures for accommodation requests, and a stronger community trust in local government.

Timeframe for Completing Retrofits/Corrections?

Given the scope of work and cost, the WT Group has recommended that we plan to complete the identified retrofits and corrections within the next 10-15 years. For the reasons listed above, it is very important that the Town has a plan that has been approved by Council, demonstrates a good faith effort to complete the retro-fits and corrections identified in the plan, and also ensures that any new construction that occurs is compliant (there is no grace period for new construction).

Consequences of Not Having an Approved Plan

If the Town does not have a plan and a complaint is filed, we could incur significant fines and consequences from the Department of Justice (DOJ). Consequences that have been imposed on other government agencies who did not have a plan include having to create a plan and have all retrofits corrected within a 12-month period, significant fines, and being required to hire multiple FT ADA Coordinators.

Conclusion

The ADA Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan are foundational tools for ensuring compliance with federal law, managing risk, and fulfilling the Town's responsibility to provide inclusive and accessible services. Together, they establish a clear framework for identifying barriers, planning improvements, and demonstrating the Town's ongoing commitment to accessibility and equity.