

Middlesex North Registry of Deeds  
360 Gorham Street  
Lowell, MA 01852  
(978) 322-9000  
www.lowelldeeds.com

Accommodation Policy  
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Introduction

The Middlesex North Registry of Deeds accommodates persons with disabilities so that they have full access to all programs, services and activities at the registry of deeds notwithstanding the architectural challenges posed by the 110 year old Middlesex Superior Courthouse.

Background

The Middlesex North Registry of Deeds was created by the state legislature in 1855 and has resided since then in the Middlesex Superior Courthouse at 360 Gorham Street, Lowell. At that time, the courthouse consisted of a single Romanesque revival style brick building that was constructed in 1848. In 1894, Middlesex County enlarged the courthouse by moving the existing building sixty feet backward and constructing a new, Classical style structure in the place vacated by the older building. The two buildings were joined together to form a single functional structure. Unfortunately, the interior floors of the old (rear) building are two feet higher than the elevation of the floors in the new (front) building, creating an accessibility challenge between offices on the same “floor.”

Because of the many Trial Court functions included in the building along with the registry of deeds, almost every available space is used. While the majority of registry public areas are located on the first floor of the main building (which is serviced by a ramp leading from ground level) two public areas of the registry have access limitations: (1) The Registered Land department is located on the first floor of the old building, two feet higher than the first floor of the new building and (2) the public research room is located in a large finished space in the basement that is serviced by a single, narrow staircase (with an additional emergency exit) that has no ramp, lift or elevator access.

Accommodation Policy

1. A notice that anyone who may need accommodation at the registry of deeds should call the registry ADA coordinator (Assistant Register Tony Accardi) at (978) 322-9000 to make specific arrangements is on the registry's overnight automated telephone answering system and on the registry's website ([www.lowelldeeds.com](http://www.lowelldeeds.com)). Additionally, this entire policy is available in PDF format on the website.
2. The Customer Service section is located at the entrance to the registry on the new building's first floor. Registry employees interact with customers via a 42-inch high, 36-inch wide built in counter. A sign directs anyone with a mobility impairment through a 36" wide gap in the counter and directly into the Customer Service area itself. Two desks within this area that are not assigned to specific employees have underneath clearance that is 28 inches high by 42 inches wide by 24 inches deep. These desks would provide mobility impaired customers with writing surfaces and computer terminals.
3. The registry's document recording area (both for Middlesex North and for the Middlesex South satellite office) is separated from public spaces by a line of tables that are each seven feet long by 36 inches wide and 39 inches high. Under normal circumstances, the customer meets the clerk at this "counter." The clerk only reviews the documents at the counter but then brings them back to a workstation in a non-public area where the documents are entered and scanned after which the original documents are returned to the customer at the Customer Service counter. In the case of a customer with a mobility impairment, a registry clerk would physically move to the customer side of the recording counter and meet with the customer at an accessible table to review the documents. The rest of the recording process would remain the same.
4. Customers frequently come to the registry of deeds to conduct real estate closings. The registry maintains five accessible tables in the immediate vicinity of the recording counter for this purpose. One of them has a sign that states "Priority Seating: Please offer this to seniors and people with disabilities." There is also an accessible coin operated copying machine in this room.
5. All registry documents have been digitalized, however, not all of these documents are immediately available to the public at this time. The documents now available to the public on both our website and on our public workstations include all documents recorded since 1950, all plans recorded since 1855, and all indexes created since 1976. The registry maintains an accessible public workstation that is posted with a sign that says "Reserved for people with disabilities: Please see registry staff to activate."

6. Documents recorded prior to 1950 and indexes created before 1976 are not currently available on our public workstations so customers normally gain access to these records in their original paper book form. These books are all located in the basement research room which is not accessible to those with mobility impairments. These records have all been digitalized, however, and they are fully available to registry employees on the office's internal computer network. Signs posted prominently throughout the registry direct any customer who cannot find a document or index entry on a public workstation to the Customer Service area. In the case of a customer with a mobility impairment, Customer Service personnel would invite the individual to an accessible desk (as described in paragraph 2 above) and would locate and print any documents needed by the customer on the registry's internal computer system. If, for any reason, a needed document is not on the registry's computer system, a registry clerk would immediately retrieve the relevant paper book and bring it back to the Customer Service section to be used by the customer.
  
7. The Registered Land department is located on the first floor of the old building, so it is not at the same elevation as the building's entrance. The two first floors are connected by an inclined stair lift. Persons in wheelchairs can use the inclined stair lift, either independently or with assistance, to access the first floor of the old building. The lift is currently in working condition and the Security Officers at the building's entrance will summons a Court Officer who will make the lift immediately available upon request.

### Conclusion

For further information about this policy, please contact Register of Deeds Richard Howe at [Richard.howe@sec.state.ma.us](mailto:Richard.howe@sec.state.ma.us) or Assistant Register Tony Accardi at [Anthony.accardi@sec.state.ma.us](mailto:Anthony.accardi@sec.state.ma.us), both at (978) 322-9000.