



Commission on Disability

ACTION CALENDAR
May 30, 2017

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
 From: Commission on Disability
 Submitted by: Martha Singer, Chairperson, Commission on Disability
 Subject: Automatic Door Openers in Multi-Unit Residential Buildings

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a Resolution requiring: all new construction of multi-unit residential buildings (four or more units) with a common entryway in the City of Berkeley to include automatic door openers; significant remodeling or conversion of residential multi-unit buildings with four or more units and a common entryway to include automatic door openers; and owners of existing multi-unit residential buildings (four or more units) with a common entryway must install automatic door openers at the request of a resident.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION

The cost of installation of an automatic door opener with remote capability is small compared to the cost of building or remodeling and is reasonably borne by the owner of the building and not the City.

The cost of conversion for an existing unit not undergoing remodel may prove an obstacle to smaller apartment building owners, but will add to the value of the property for all residents and visitors, and possibly the City could provide some offset for the initial cost.

IMPACT ON ACCESSABILITY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES AND OTHERS

The first step to being included in residential activities is the ability to get in the front door as independently as possible. People who use wheelchairs, walkers, canes and crutches, and those who move more slowly or have difficulty manipulating the weight or pressure of the front door, will be benefited. Automated door openers also allow all residents the ability to hold the door open briefly when they are carrying trash, moving in, pushing a stroller, wheeling their bike out, or drinking coffee.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

Currently, the builder or owner of a multiunit residential building may require a disabled resident to bear the cost of an exterior door conversion. There is no current requirement even for new multi-unit residential construction to install an automated door opener. This impacts not only the residents of the building but also limits the ability of disabled individuals to enter the building to visit a resident.

Although the ADA makes certain requirements in new residential multiunit construction, it does not specifically require an automatic door opener for exterior doors. An individual with the need for additional time, limitations in the use of upper extremities, or using a mobility aid such as a wheelchair, cane, walker, or crutches may be able to fit through the door dimensions, but with automatic door openers they can do so independently.

Door openers at businesses allow improved access for individuals with disabilities, and also improve access for others carrying or pushing items. They are a little different in that they remain unlocked during business hours, while residential requires intermittent unlocking/locking as well as opening and closing.

Regulations for public housing and commercial businesses are different. Our intent is to promote ease of use for visiting and living in multi-unit residences for individuals with disabilities in Berkeley. As Berkeley moves forward with new residences, we envision Berkeley remaining a leader in independent living and visitability.

It is anticipated that this requirement would apply to multi-unit residential buildings of four or more units, with a common entrance, and would apply to significant remodel or conversion of buildings with the potential for access. It is not expected to apply to older buildings that for other existing reasons are not reasonably accessible.

We anticipate the City may offer further guidance in how to reasonably implement this improved standard for the City of Berkeley. It is possible the City may develop a more comprehensive ordinance on visitability and universal design.

BACKGROUND

At a regular meeting on March 1, 2017, the Commission on Disability took action to recommend to the City Council to require that all new construction of multi-unit residential buildings (four or more units) with a common entryway in the City of Berkeley will include automatic door openers, and, furthermore that automatic door openers will be added to existing multi-unit residential buildings (four or more units), with a common entryway, at times of significant remodeling or conversion, or at the request of a resident of said building.

Action: Motion to submit to Council item about recommendation to require that all new construction of multi-unit residential buildings (four or more units) with a common entryway in the City of Berkeley will include automatic door openers, and, furthermore that automatic door openers will be added to existing multi-unit residential buildings (four or more units) with a common entryway at times of significant remodeling or conversion, or at the request of a resident of said building.

M/S/C, (Graham/Schwartz). Ayes: Singer; Walsh; Weiss; Nayas: None; Absent: Leeder; Upadhyay.

Automatic door openers are common in Berkeley businesses. This proposal is for multi-unit residential buildings. Automatic door openers can be installed in an existing building without significant architectural modification, but do require a power source. There is a mechanism to push the door open and closed that attaches to the door like a spring, and there is a need for a mechanism to trigger the door opening, and a need to have the door lock in between users. In a residential building, an individual can use a mechanism like a key fob to trigger the action from the exterior. Residents already inside the building can push a bar inside the entrance to activate the mechanism for exit. Larger apartment buildings that allow the “buzzing in” of visitors can also allow for the remote activation of the automatic door.

It is currently estimated the installation cost of an automatic door opener with secure mechanism and key fob activation is in the range of \$5,000.

New buildings of multi-unit housing have certain requirements for accessibility. Some existing multi-unit housing may not be accessible for other reasons, such as multiple stairs to enter. In existing multi-unit housing that is already inaccessible for other reasons such as multiple stairs, it is not reasonable to retrofit for automatic door openers and this requirement would not apply.

Individuals who do not have a disability may experience life changes that impair their mobility temporarily or permanently, and these changes can be mitigated in part at times by simple changes such as an automatic door opener.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Planning now for the use of a residential multi-unit building by individuals with disabilities allows individuals to age in place, and make sense.

RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

Much new construction appears already underway on multi-unit housing in Berkeley, and going forward housing should be as accessible as possible. Automatic door openers benefit visitors and residents with and without disabilities.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS CONSIDERED

None

CITY MANAGER

See Companion Report.

CONTACT PERSON

Ella Callow, Secretary for Commission on Disability (510) 981-6418

Attachments:

- 1: Resolution

RESOLUTION NO. ##,###-N.S.

AUTOMATIC DOOR OPENERS IN MULTI-UNIT RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS

WHEREAS, automatic door openers enable people with temporary and permanent disabilities, as well as able-bodied citizens, greater ease of access to buildings; and

WHEREAS, neither applicable state or federal law specifically requires inclusion of automatic door openers for multi-unit residential buildings; and

WHEREAS, currently, the builder or owner of a multi-unit residential building may pass the cost of exterior door conversion to residents with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, inclusion of automatic door openers during construction, significant remodeling or conversion of multi-unit residential buildings (4 or more units) with a common entryway ensures that Berkeley remains a leader in independent living and visitability.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the City of Berkeley that all new construction, significant remodeling or conversion of multi-unit residential buildings (4 or more units) with a common entryway in the City of Berkeley will include automatic door openers, and owners of multi-unit residential buildings (4 or more units) will install automatic door openers, and bear the cost, at the request of a building resident.