

Opening doors for all.

How accessibility-focused entry solutions elevate the guest experience in foodservice and hospitality

In today's hospitality landscape, accessibility is no longer a "nice to have"—it is a business necessity. According to the CDC, one in four U.S. adults lives with a disability. Despite this significant demographic, many hotels, restaurants, and entertainment venues still fall short in providing accessible entry points.

Disabled guests expect what any guest would want when visiting an establishment - dignity, ease, and seamless inclusion from the moment they arrive. Whether it's a traveler in a wheelchair, an elderly diner with limited mobility, or a parent pushing a stroller, the entry experience sets the tone for their entire visit.



Welcome every guest

Automatic doors—sliding, swinging, revolving, and low-energy—are a seamless welcome for every guest. They are a simple yet powerful solution to remove difficulty at the point of entry. These systems provide effortless access for all guests, without the need for physical exertion or assistance. They're about more than convenience—they are an expression of hospitality, signaling that every guest is welcomed and valued.

The audiences helped by automatic doors are extensive. Guests using mobility aids benefit because navigating a manual door can be a barrier, and automatic systems allow independence and ease. Travelers with luggage appreciate touch-free entry when their hands are full. Parents with strollers eliminate

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awkward maneuvering and improve safety. Delivery workers and service staff enjoy efficient entry that reduces delays and improves back-of-house operations.

Added value of hygiene

Touchless entry also provides a dual value. Obvious accessibility benefits are coupled with public hygiene. The COVID-19 pandemic reshaped public expectations around cleanliness, accelerating the adoption of touchless technologies across industries. In hospitality, inherently touchless automatic doors help to minimize the transmission of germs and bacteria while they enhance physical accessibility.

Think of fast-casual restaurants, where hands-free doors reduce touchpoints for high-traffic entries. In airport lounges, they enable clean, stress-free entry for travelers juggling bags, children, or assistive devices. They help upscale hotels reinforce a brand image with elegant, hygienic, and inclusive access.

By integrating touchless solutions, operators create a healthier, more welcoming environment that aligns with evolving guest expectations.



Goodwill branding

It's not just upscale hotels that can get a brand boost from automatic doors. For all markets, accessible design delivers measurable returns beyond regulatory compliance. Investing in accessibility is not just the right thing to do—it's a smart, forward-looking business strategy.

Businesses that prioritize inclusive entryways benefit from increased guest satisfaction, positive word-of-mouth, and stronger brand loyalty. With an enhanced reputation of inclusivity, guests are more likely to return to and recommend an establishment to friends. Exceeding ADA standards also lowers the risk of accessibility-related legal claims. The durability of automatic doors can reduce maintenance costs by requiring less-frequent repair than traditional manual doors that are prone to slamming and wear.

“Accessibility in hospitality begins at the front door.”

The future

Leaders in the hospitality industry are embracing universal design principles that consider the needs of all users from the outset. Automatic entry solutions are increasingly integrated with broader trends in sustainability, smart buildings, and experience design.

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Energy-efficient door systems help reduce building energy use, and can respond to occupancy sensors or guest apps that enhance personalization and efficiency, while seamless entries contribute to a curated, frictionless guest experience that defines premium brands.

As competition intensifies, businesses that anticipate these trends will be better positioned to meet the demands of travelers as they continue to evolve over the coming years.

To make hospitality environments more accessible and inclusive, facility managers and architects would be wise to consider the following guidelines.

Know where to install automatic doors, including main entrances and vestibules, side entrances and service doors, lobby restrooms, conference and event center access points, and high-traffic internal zones like buffet areas and pool access.

Get up to speed on best practices. Work with AAADM-certified installers to help ensure code compliance. Choose doors that meet ANSI/BHMA standards and offer features like battery backup, adjustable sensitivity, and quiet operation. Conduct regular maintenance checks to ensure uninterrupted function and guest satisfaction.

Accessibility in hospitality begins at the front door. By implementing automatic and touchless entry systems, foodservice and hospitality businesses can deliver a more inclusive, hygienic, and welcoming guest experience—while also gaining a competitive edge. When every detail contributes to customer perception, the right kind of entrance can open the door to lasting success. ■

AAADM is here to help

Regardless of what type of door best fits your facility's needs, make sure you are contracting with a company that employs AAADM Certified Technicians to ensure your doors are installed to the ANSI 156.10 or ANSI 156.19 pedestrian safety standards. You can find a directory of AAADM members here: <https://www.aaadm.com/member-directory/index.html>