

Designing for all.

How automatic doors enhance accessibility, value, and compliance in multifamily and commercial buildings

In today's real estate landscape, accessibility is a marker of good design, responsible ownership, and future-ready planning. Whether developing a Class-A office building, luxury apartment complex, or mixed-use facility, building stakeholders face rising expectations to create environments that welcome everyone.

Automatic doors are a practical, high-impact solution, supporting inclusive design goals while enhancing value. From easing access for people with disabilities to enabling smooth entry for everyone from delivery personnel to parents with strollers, these systems reduce access hinderances, elevate the overall visitor/user experience, and exceed compliance with reputation-makers like the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). For architects and property decision-makers, this isn't just about doors—it's about creating smarter, safer, and more inclusive spaces.



Accessibility is smart design

Modern building architecture has to meet the needs of a diverse population. The percentage of Americans aged 65 and older is growing rapidly. Nearly one in four U.S. adults lives with a disability. Meanwhile, building occupants and visitors frequently include families, couriers, or service personnel. All can benefit from barrier-free access.

Accessible entrances are also a differentiator in the highly competitive commercial and residential real

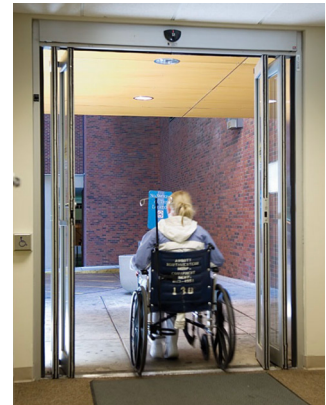
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estate markets. They can attract and retain tenants to multi-family dwellings by helping to create easy-to-navigate environments. Commercial building owners can see improved tenant satisfaction and greater leasing appeal because of the enhanced user experience. Automatic doors also help design professionals bring future-proof projects to life with inclusive, forward-thinking architecture.

Inclusive architecture

Automatic door systems marry elegance and function. With choices like sliding, telescoping, swinging, and low-energy options, there's a door for nearly every application. Each enables seamless access while complementing a building's aesthetics.

Building designers and contractors can collaborate to determine the best automatic door choice for various areas of construction. Main entrances are an obvious consideration, but there's also the parking garage entrance, elevator lobbies, and interior shared common spaces such as the fitness center, public restrooms, and other amenities like a business center.



Sliding doors are perfect for high-traffic or wide-entry locations, offering smooth, hands-free access. Telescoping doors are ideal for narrow passageways. Swinging doors work well in retrofits or interior applications where space is limited. Low-energy options operate via push-button or sensor, offering performance with minimal power consumption. All of these systems can be customized with finishes and materials to blend with the architectural vision, maintaining beauty while enhancing accessibility.

“Designing for accessibility is no longer optional.”



Making a building physically accessible to all people isn't just the right thing to do, there are various standards governing it. ANSI A117.1, which covers accessible and usable buildings and facilities, has been around since 1961. It's a nationally recognized standard that provides technical criteria for making buildings, sites, and facilities accessible to and usable by people with disabilities. It is widely referenced in building codes.

In 2021, the International Building Code finally included a provision long sought by accessibility advocates: the mandated inclusion of automatic doors for entrances to public buildings. IBC 1105.1.1 stipulates them for buildings meeting certain occupant load thresholds.

Surprisingly, the Americans with Disabilities Act does not have an automatic door requirement, only requiring doorways to be 32 inches wide and have “maneuvering clearance” for a wheelchair user to open the door and roll through. However, by proactively implementing automatic door entrances, building owners demonstrate a strong commitment to equity and inclusion.

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Integration with smart building systems

Today's access solutions don't stand alone—they work as a part of complete, connected access systems. Automatic doors can integrate with keycard and mobile access systems, intercoms and video entry, and emergency, security, and fire safety controls. This systemic cooperation improves convenience and control while enabling easier retrofits as technology evolves. Automatic doors are an investment in flexibility, positioning properties for future upgrades without major overhauls.

Long-term benefits

Automatic door systems are a capital investment with dividends that can reveal themselves across the total lifecycle of a building. They can reduce liability and exposure to claims related to access issues. They can help to minimize heat transmission, air leakage, and air infiltration while keeping climate-controlled air inside, reducing the energy needed to maintain a constant temperature. Buildings can also see an increase in their marketability because accessibility appeals to a wider range of tenants and users. Though initial costs vary depending on the type and scale of installation, long-term ROI is amplified through tenant retention, branding strength, and regulatory peace of mind.

Work with AAADM-Certified Inspectors to help ensure compliance with ANSI standards and maximize product lifespan. Plan for integration early by coordinating automatic doors with access controls and electrical systems during design or retrofit planning. Consider aesthetics and choose finishes and configurations that complement the architectural identity of the building.

Designing for accessibility is no longer optional. It's an essential component of a building's long-term success. Automatic doors offer a cost-effective, user-friendly, and visually integrated method to meet the need for functionality and form in multifamily and commercial buildings. For architects, developers, and property managers, automatic doors represent a future-ready solution that can elevate every aspect of the built environment—from function and safety to value and inclusion. Inclusion is smart design. Automatic doors help clear the way. ■



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>