



SAN FRANCISCO HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY
**Department of Disability
and Aging Services**

Office on
Disability and
Accessibility



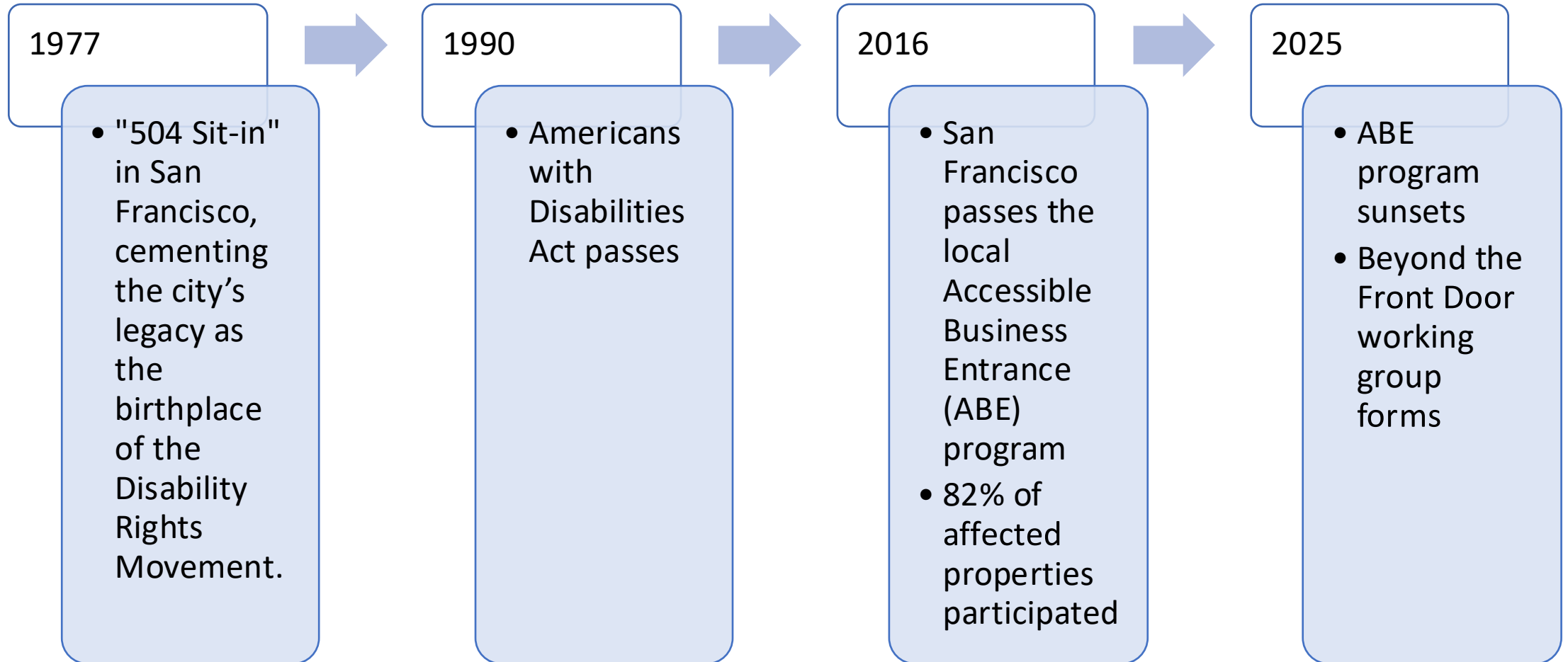
Beyond the Front Door

Working group update to the Small Business Commission - March 23, 2026

Today's presentation

1. Brief history of the initiative
2. Goals
3. Progress to date
4. Best practice guide
5. Coming up

Overview & history



Working group

Office on Disability & Accessibility

Eli Gelardin

Debby Kaplan

Alicia Contreras

Joe Molica

Department of Building Inspection

Matthew Greene

Tate Hanna

Patrick Hannan

Stephen Kwok

Kelley Omran

Office of Small Business

Michelle Reynolds

Kerry Birnbach

Goals

- Promote concept of customers with disabilities as a business opportunity
- Provide businesses with an easy-to-use guide with recommendations and best practices they can readily adopt
- Encourage mutually beneficial relationships between small businesses and customers with disabilities

Tactics for year 1

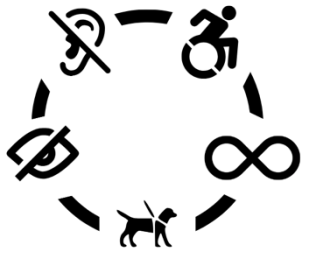
- Best Practice Guide for disability inclusion
- ✓ Short videos that explain and illustrate disability inclusion
- Social media campaigns inviting people with disabilities to submit their own short
- ✓ Information in the Office of Small Business newsletter
- Discuss campaigns and strategies on disability inclusion with the Mayor's Disability Council and Small Business Commission.
- Name of the initiative and logo or sticker to show participation.

Ensuring building accessibility

DBI assigned a senior building inspector as a dedicated Certified Access Specialist (CASp)

Some accomplishments include:

- Led enforcement resulting in the repair of two elevators and two lifts that had been long out of service
- Partnered with Building Inspectors to ensure 20 projects were constructed to accessibility standards
- Inspector Trainings
 1. Accessibility upgrades for existing buildings
 2. Requirements for accessible routes
 3. Wheelchair maneuvering spaces
 4. Protruding objects
 5. Signage



Serving clients with disabilities: A guide for small business owners

A guide of practical ideas for businesses to create a welcoming place for customers with disabilities. They focus on low cost or no cost actions.

- Created by the Office on Disability & Accessibility in consultation with community groups and people with disabilities
- It will be available as a print-friendly PDF, accessible webpage on SF.gov, and social media shorts

Excerpts: General guidance

- Assume competence
- Ask how the person prefers to communicate
- Speak to the person, not a companion
- Ask before touching mobility devices or belongings

Excerpts: Blind or low vision



- Ask “Would you like assistance?” and let the person take your arm if they choose
- Read menus, labels, or printed information aloud when asked

Excerpts: Deaf or hard-of- hearing



- Start by asking, “What’s the best way for us to communicate with you?” and honor their choice—whether it’s sign language, email, captioning, speech-to-text, texting, writing on a paper, or another method
- When speaking, face the person and remove a mask when possible.

Excerpts: Neurodiverse



- Post clear signage with simple instructions
- Offer step-by-step explanations of services
- Share what to expect (e.g., “Your appointment will take 45 minutes. We’ll begin with...”)
- **Giving choice empowers clients and reduces stress.**

Coming up



Workshop:

May 5, 12-1:30 PM

Main Library

A dynamic, in-person presentation, small business owners will learn simple, practical, and affordable strategies for welcoming customers with a wide range of disabilities. It will feature real-world examples that show how small changes can make a big impact.

Next steps

Submit year 1 report to the Board of Supervisors in April 2026

Publish and disseminate the guide

Direct outreach to Union Square and SOMA businesses ahead of the National Association of the Deaf conference in Summer 2026, when we expect upwards of 3,000 deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals.

Create social media content, featuring businesses who are leaders in this space

Merchant walks & newsletters



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Thank you