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Lexington, SC 29072

April 20, 2010

Dr. P. George Benson  
66 George Street,  
Charleston, SC 29424

**Subject:** Investigative Report Regarding the Difficulties Associated with ADA Renovations to Historic Structures

Beginning in early March, our group has been researching the problems and costs associated with the renovation of historically significant properties. Our focus was on the downtown Charleston area, and as such, much of our conclusions will be drawn from evidence garnished from this area. However, the same problems with ADA compliance, renovations costs, and historic significance exist throughout the United States in historically important areas such as Boston, Philadelphia, and Washington D.C.

The main problem stems from recent and ongoing legislation concerning the ADA that has made expanded the Act to include laws that before simply did not exist. This, coupled with the fact that many of the historical structures that businesses in the Charleston area operate out of were built before the conception of the ADA has lead to an increase in lawsuits filed against business owners as well as increased pressure on the state and local government by business owners and historical preservation societies to grant pardons and “grandfather in” certain structures. Unfortunately, this conflict of ideals has lead to a stalemate in terms of renovations, and the people feeling the most pressure are the business owners and the disabled.

### **What We Found**

Our investigation into the downtown Charleston area, specifically the College of Charleston (COFC) found that many of the organization’s buildings did not meet ADA standards (old or new) and in some cases resulted in not only inaccessibility by the disabled but also unsafe conditions for the non-disabled. Furthermore, when renovations were attempted, they usually consisted of non-permanent and historically (and aesthetically) unappealing solutions such as plywood “ramps” laid over a portion of the stairs, or removing the doors on a structure instead of making them handicapped accessible.

A large part of the draw of COFC as well as Charleston as a whole is its historic allure, the fact that the city itself has a heritage and a culture. Allowing this to be inaccessible to the disabled is both unconstitutional and against the law. Furthermore, allowing “renovations” that destroy the beauty of the buildings is just as morally reprehensible.

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### **Our Solution**

Our group has established a third party organization to aid in the cooperation between business owners, historical preservation groups, and disabled advocates. We have formulated a process by which each property is evaluated on its own merit and specialized solutions are put into play. By hiring our group to work for your city we can maintain the persona it has taken Charleston a hundred years to develop while still bringing the structures contained therein up to spec with current ADA and federal building codes. It is our mission to enact our solutions in a timely manner in order to serve the needs of our client as well as those of the disabled. I hope you will consider this matter, and I await your decision.

Sincerely,

John Doe  
ADA Compliance Group