

Accessible Tourism & Economic Opportunity

Fort Wayne, Indiana

Why Accessibility Is an Economic Opportunity

People with disabilities represent one of the largest untapped tourism markets in the United States. When destinations invest in accessible infrastructure, they attract more visitors, longer stays, and larger travel groups. Accessibility expands the visitor base while strengthening local businesses.

Key National Data

| Statistic | Impact |
|---|---|
| 26% of Americans live with a disability | Over 60 million potential travelers |
| \$50+ billion annual travel spending | Direct spending by travelers with disabilities |
| \$100+ billion total impact | Including companions and family members |
| 25.6 million travelers | 77 million trips taken by Americans with disabilities |

Why This Matters for Fort Wayne

Fort Wayne is already a regional destination for sports tournaments, cultural attractions, family tourism, and riverfront recreation. Accessible infrastructure allows the city to reach millions of additional travelers and their families.

Local Economic Impact Potential

If Fort Wayne attracted just 10,000 accessible travelers annually and each travel party spent \$1,000–\$2,000 during their visit, the city could see an estimated \$10–20 million in annual tourism spending benefiting hotels, restaurants, retail, transportation, and entertainment venues.

Key Takeaway

Accessible tourism is not simply about compliance. It is an economic development strategy that helps cities attract new visitors, increase tourism spending, and strengthen local businesses.

Sources

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) – Disability and Health Data

Open Doors Organization – Market Study of Travelers with Disabilities

Destinations International – Accessibility and Tourism Economic Impact Research

U.S. Travel Association – Travel Economic Impact Reports

World Health Organization – Global Disability Report

U.S. Census Bureau – American Community Survey Disability Statistics