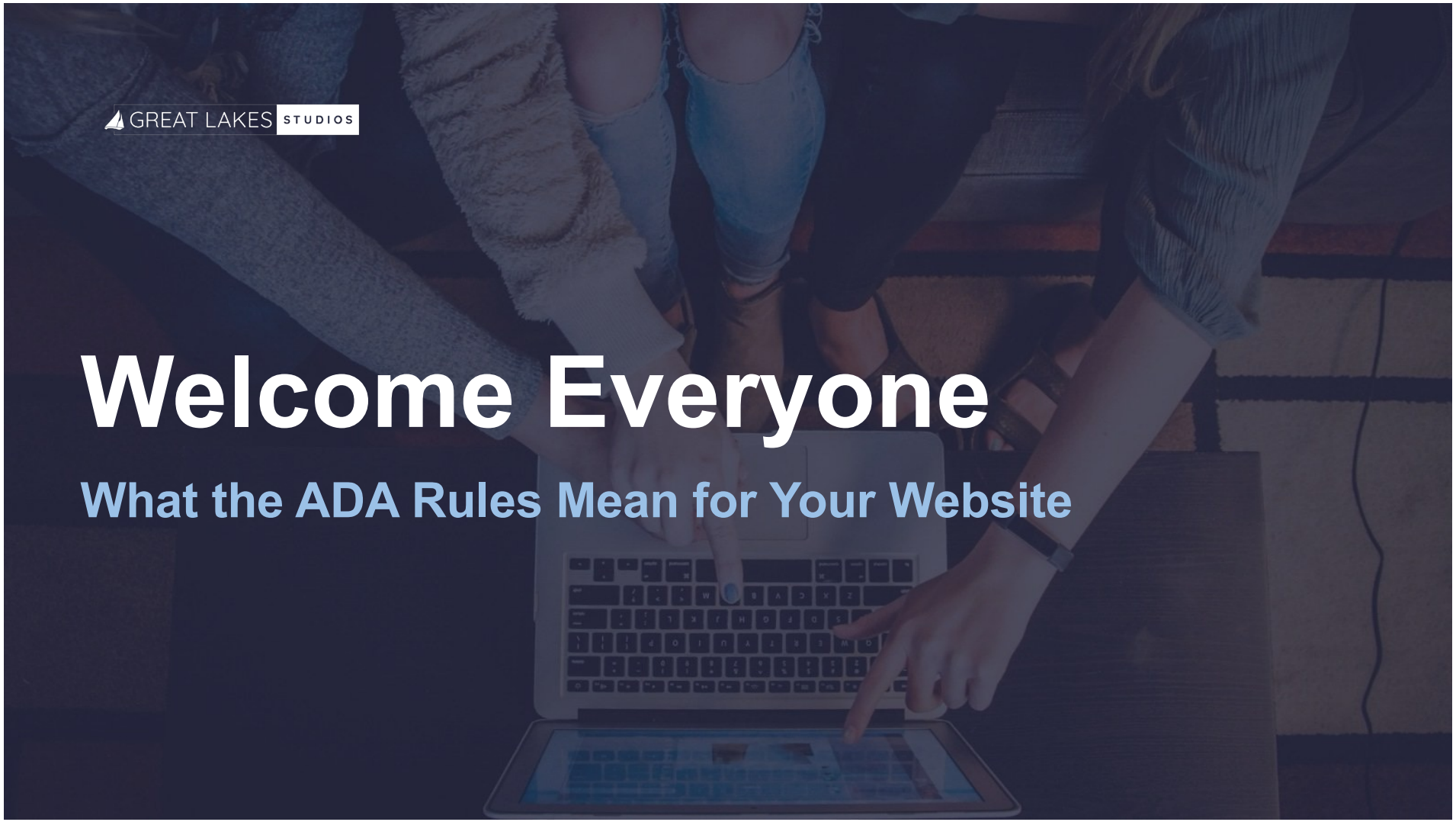

GREAT LAKES STUDIOS
Welcome Everyone
What the ADA Rules Mean for Your Website

Why this matters

1 in 4

of US adults report a disability. That’s more than 70 million people.

Source: CDC, 2022 data

Why this matters



“Welcome everyone” isn’t just something we put on a banner. For a lot of us in this room, it’s now the law.

Why this matters

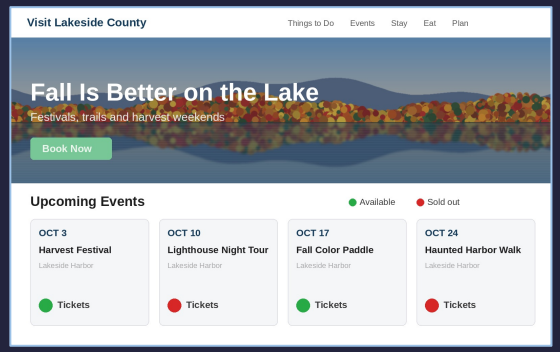
Who We're Actually Talking About

"Accessibility" can feel abstract. Let's make it concrete.

- **Blindness and low vision**
- **Color blindness**
- **Deaf and hard-of-hearing visitors**
- **Limited mobility and motor control**
- **ADHD, dyslexia, autism**
- **Seizure disorders**

Why this matters

Same Page, Different Eyes



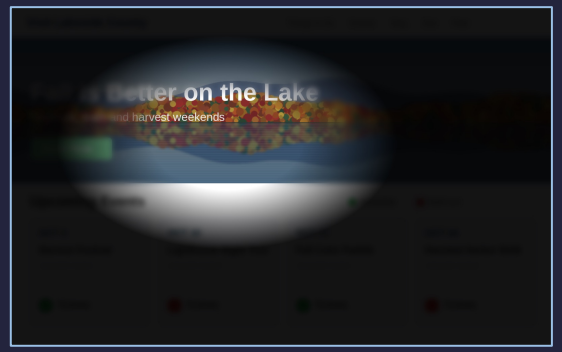
Typical view

What your designer sees.



Low vision

Blur and low contrast.



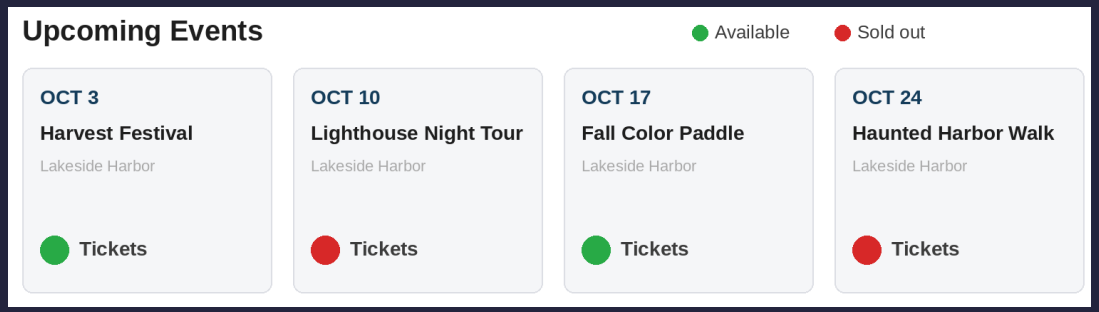
Tunnel vision

Common with glaucoma.

Simulations are approximations. Everyone’s vision is different.

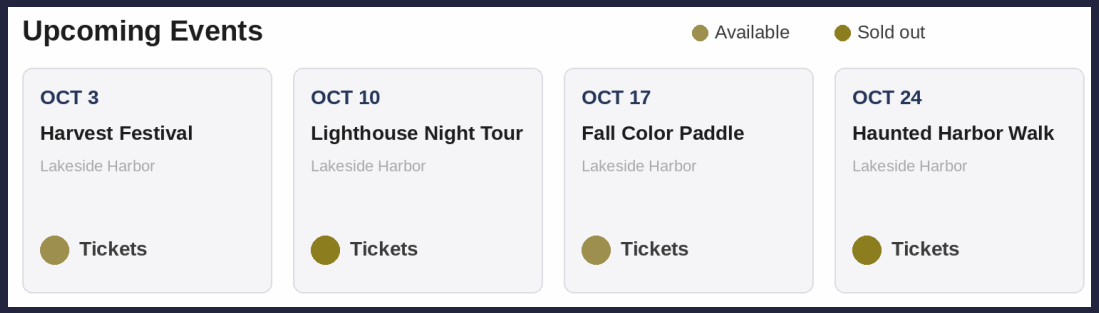
Why this matters

Red Means Sold Out. Unless You Can’t See Red.



Typical view

Green is available. Red is sold out.



Red-green color blindness

Which ones can you still buy?

GREAT LAKES STUDIOS

Why this matters

44%

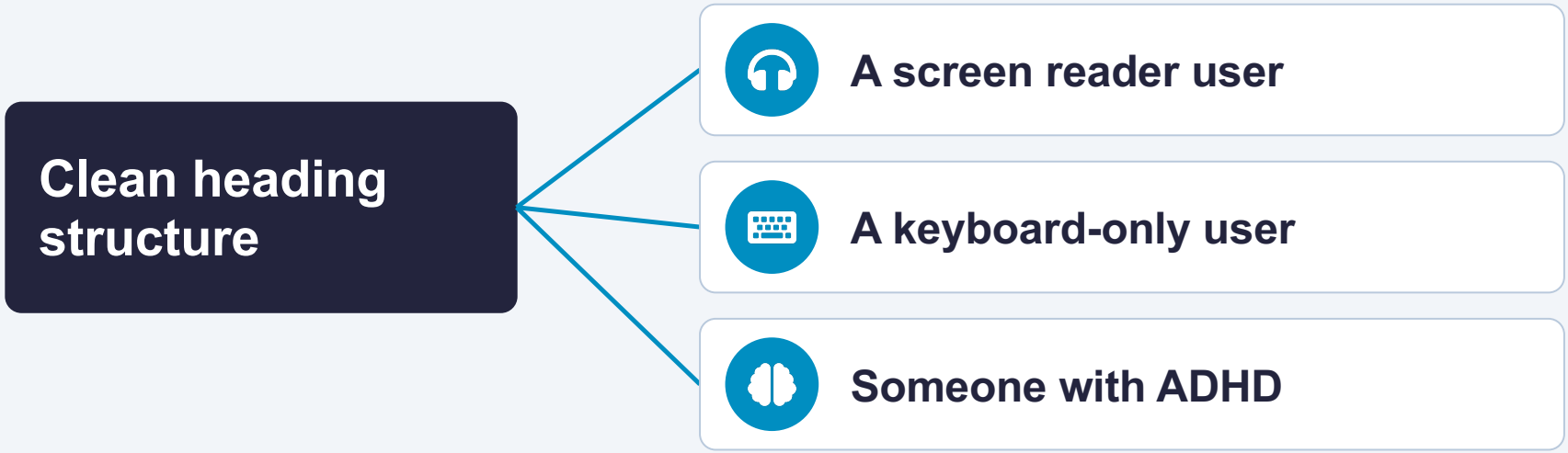
of adults 65 and older report a disability. That's the traveler you already market to.

Source: CDC, 2022 data

Why this matters

One Fix, Multiple People

Most fixes aren’t disability-specific. One change helps several groups.



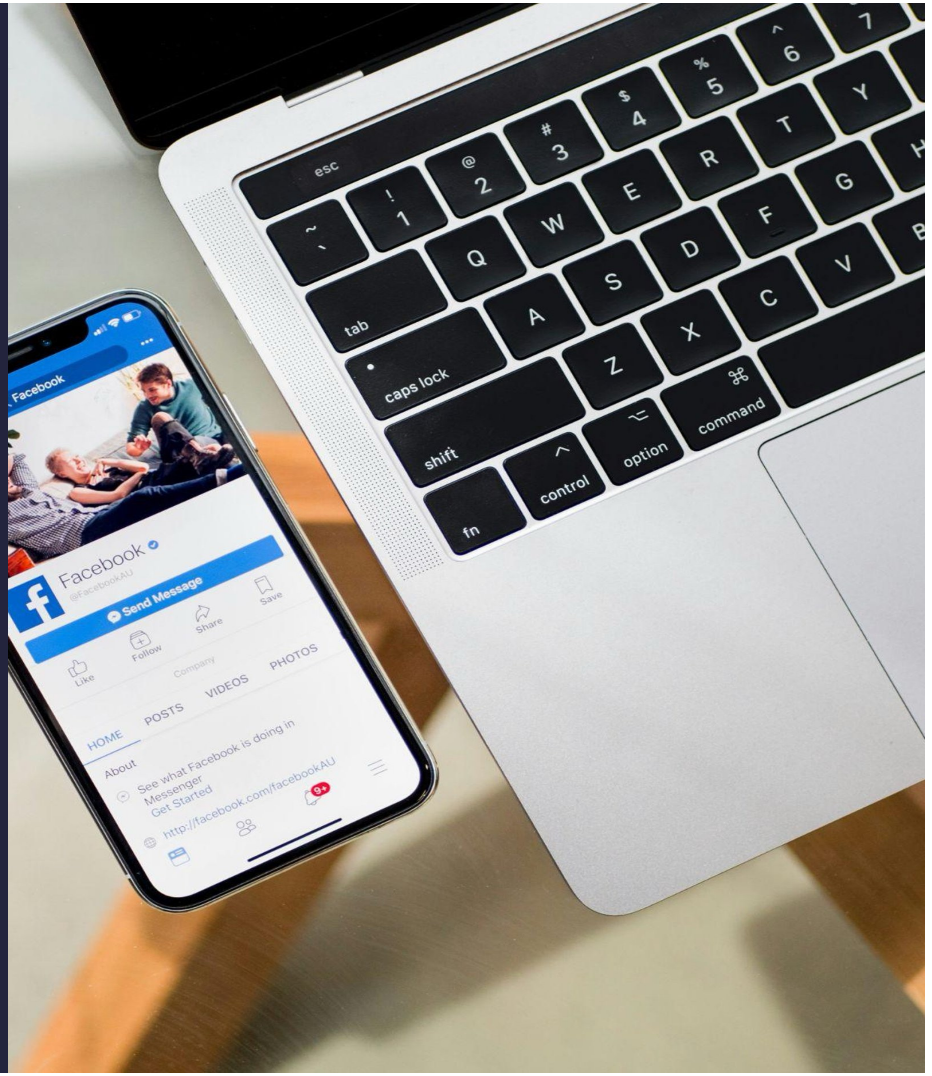
All from the same fix.

Why this matters

The Reality Check

If your website wasn’t built with accessibility in mind, you’re not alone.

You also just got more time. Let’s talk about how to use it.



The rule

The Rule, Plain and Simple

In 2024, the DOJ updated Title II of the ADA. Your website and mobile apps need to be accessible.



Your website



Your mobile apps



Your vendors' tools on your site

The rule

“Wait, Does This Apply to Us?”

A lot of CVBs and tourism boards don’t think of themselves as “government.”

Legally, many of you are.

If you’re a public entity, this rule is about you.



The rule

How to Tell If You're a Public Entity

Bring these questions to your lawyer:


Did a city, county or state action create your organization?


Who appoints or controls your board?


Does a government control your budget or operations?


Are you a department or agency of a local government?

Where your funding comes from is one factor. It's not the whole answer.

The rule

Not a Public Entity? Do It Anyway.

3,117

federal website accessibility lawsuits in 2025

~$50B

spent on travel in a year by US travelers with disabilities

81%

of those travelers use the internet to help book

It’s a legal risk and a market you’re leaving on the table.

Sources: Seyfarth Shaw; Open Doors Organization and The Harris Poll, 2024

The rule

The Standard

The legal requirement

WCAG 2.1 AA

What the law actually requires.

Aiming higher

WCAG 2.2 AA

Newer and more thorough. A good call, but a choice.

The rule

Find Your Deadline

Population 50,000+

April 26, 2027

Under 50,000 or a special district

April 26, 2028

Extended one year in April 2026. The requirements didn’t change.

Use the 2020 Census data if you aren’t sure.

The rule

It’s Already on the Radar

This isn’t some obscure federal rule nobody’s watching.



The Ohio Auditor of State sent this warning to many CVBs.
Then updated it the same day the DOJ extended the deadline.

Your auditor already knows.

The rule

What You Don’t Have to Fix

Five exceptions. Knowing them matters as much as knowing the rule.

1. Archived content
2. Old documents nobody’s using to access a service
3. Truly independent third-party content
4. Password-protected personal documents
5. Social posts made before your deadline

The rule

Read the Fine Print

Each exception has conditions. An “archived” page only counts if it’s:

- **Labeled as archived**
- **Untouched since archiving**
- **Not needed for a service you offer**

Miss one condition, and it’s not exempt anymore.

What you can do yourself

How to Evaluate Your Site

1 Scan

Run a free automated scan on your most important pages.

2 Check

Test by hand: keyboard, zoom and a screen reader.

3 Ask

If you can, have people who use assistive tech try your key tasks.

Automated tools catch about a third of the problems. The rest takes a human.

What you can do yourself

Free Tools: Page Scanners

WAVE

WebAIM. Browser extension that marks problems right on the page.

axe DevTools

Deque. Browser extension with developer-friendly results.

Lighthouse

Built into Chrome. Gives you an accessibility score.

Accessibility Insights

Microsoft. Adds a guided manual check.

What you can do yourself

More Free Tools



Color contrast

WebAIM Contrast Checker and TPGi's Colour Contrast Analyser



Screen readers

NVDA on Windows. VoiceOver, built into every Mac and iPhone.



Whole-site scans

Unlighthouse and Pa11y. Free, but they need someone familiar with code.

What you can do yourself

What You Can Do Right Away, No Developer Needed

- **Write real alt text.**
- **Use headings the way they’re meant to be used.**
- **Name your links something other than “click here.”**

What you can do yourself

A Few More Fixes



Don’t rely on color alone to say something.



Use tables for data, not layout.



Don’t bury text inside images.

What you can do yourself

Three More Things You Can Handle In-House

- **Turn on captions for videos, then edit them.**
- **Check contrast before you publish.**
- **Write a real title for every page.**

What you can do yourself

Quick Checks Anyone Can Run



Zoom to 200%

See what breaks.



Put down the mouse

Tab through the page. Can you reach everything?



Listen for five minutes

Turn on a screen reader and try to find a specific event.

What you can do yourself

Your PDFs and Visitor Guides



Old PDFs may be exempt. Not if people use them to plan a visit.

The guide on your homepage most definitely counts.

Make the PDF/flipbook experience accessible.



Look at that list again. It’s also what search engines and AI tools use to understand your page.

What you can do yourself

Why This List Pays You Back Twice

Captions
Give search engines and AI actual text to index from video.

Page titles
One of your strongest ranking signals.

Headings
Show screen readers and AI what matters on the page.

Alt text
How image search and AI understand your photos.

You’re not choosing between accessible and findable.

When you need a developer

Where You'll Need a Developer



Keyboard traps and focus order



Custom features like carousels and booking widgets



Forms that don't talk to screen readers

When you need a developer

What a Developer Will Actually Do



Make calendars and booking tools work by keyboard



Give icon buttons real labels



Bring back the visible focus outline



Add a “skip to main content” link



Connect form fields to their labels and errors



Add pause buttons to carousels and video

When you need a developer

Overlays: Then and Now

Two years ago

Hard coding was a big-ticket project.

An overlay was often what a modest budget could cover.



Today

Developers have tools that cut the hours.

Real fixes are more within reach, and they solve the problem.

An overlay doesn’t fix the problem.

It runs on top of your code. Screen readers and keyboards still run into what’s underneath.



The good news: it’s a subscription. When it renews, move that money to real fixes.

When you need a developer

Your Developer Has New Tools

AI coding tools help a developer get through the repetitive work in far fewer hours.

- Labeling buttons and form fields
- Fixing heading structure across templates
- Adding keyboard support
- Drafting alt text for a person to review

Fewer hours.
Real fixes.
A budget that works.

When you need a developer

Who Fixes What?

Where the problem lives	Who fixes it	What it takes
Content: alt text, links, headings, PDFs	Your staff	Staff time
CMS settings and theme options	A web-savvy staffer	Staff time
Site templates and code	A developer	Fix once, every page improves
Custom features: calendars, maps, booking	A developer, plus testing	Your biggest line item
Third-party tools: ticketing, booking engines	The vendor	Add to the contract

When you need a developer

Your Vendors' Tools Are Your Responsibility

1



Ask for an accessibility audit.

2



Test the product yourself with a keyboard before you add a new feature.

3



Put accessibility requirements in contracts and renewals.

When you need a developer

What It Costs: Ballpark Ranges

Do it yourself

Free

Free tools plus staff time

Professional audit

$1.5K–$5K

Small site. Larger sites run more.

Developer fixes

$500–$10K+

Depends on your templates and custom features

Next steps

Your To-Do List

1. Scan your ten most important pages.
2. Tab through them with a keyboard.
3. Fix what blocks booking, forms and event search first.

Next steps

Planning for 2027

1. Confirm your deadline and whether the rule applies to you. Talk to counsel.
2. Run a free scan before budget season so you know the size of the issue.
3. Put developer hours for code fixes in the budget as their own line item.
4. Look at vendor contracts renewing in 2027 and add accessibility requirements.
5. Set aside money for testing after fixes and ongoing monitoring.

Next steps

Resources Worth Bookmarking

ADA.gov	The DOJ’s fact sheet on the web rule
OhioAuditor.gov	The Auditor’s April 20, 2026 advisory memo
W3.org/WAI	WCAG quick reference
WebAIM.org	Plain-language guides, the contrast checker and WAVE


Questions
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