

## Success in Savannah, Georgia

We at **Coastal Empire Polio Survivors Association (CEPSA)** in Savannah, Georgia, have improved accessibility in Savannah's Historic District as an on-going project since 2006. There were so many streets that did NOT have curb cuts to allow a person using a scooter or wheelchair to exit the sidewalk that the person had to turn around and backtrack to another street.

*It was the vision of our Accessibility Chairman, Dan Shehan, the committee, and CEPSA not to come down on restaurants and the City of Savannah for their lack of accessibility, but to take a positive uplifting approach. We chose to encourage people to make their establishments accessible and to recognize those that did. We chose to point out to the city council the location of needed curb cuts and sidewalk repair, and at the same time, help people with disabilities safely tour our beautiful Historic District.*

Shehan received permission to design a navigational guide for scooter and wheelchair users that mapped out the accessible path of the Historic District for vacationers and sightseers to tour our beautiful city.

After countless hours of the committee actually driving their scooters on the sidewalks and taking trips in cars on every historic street to determine the accessible path, the first map was published. Copies were distributed to the Visitor's Center, hotels and restaurants.

When Shehan contacted city officials, they were so impressed by the positive attention the map brought to the lack of accessibility in the Historic District, they allocated more than \$200,000 to add 500 curb cuts. Next, the committee up-dated the map with the new curb cuts and distributed the new version.

Success breeds success! The following year the city added at least 500 more curb cuts at an additional cost of \$200,000.

The committee contacted every restaurant in the area and included the name and address of those that were accessible on the back of the map. (After the first map was published and its popularity grew, more restaurants asked to be included.)

The committee sought sponsors for the third edition of the map (2008) and their contributions completely paid for the copies. Please click on

this link [Project # 1](#) to see the map of the accessible route in Savannah's Historic District.

This is an idea that many of our groups could implement in their cities or towns.

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