

2023 ADA Transition Plan Annual Update

Background

In September of 2022, City staff in collaboration with community stakeholders, consulting firms, and engineering teams, completed an updated ADA Transition Plan. The purpose of this Plan is to guide the City in implementing and advancing the culture of inclusivity and accessibility for all residents which includes increasing access to the City's programs, services, activities, parks, and facilities for individuals with disabilities. Each year, the City will prepare an Annual Report based on the work that various departments have performed to provide information relating to the City's Transition Plan progress.

Key Accomplishments

Included in the 2022 Transition Plan were prioritized recommendations that once achieved, would provide an immediate impact of ADA compliance. These actions included:

- Appointing a full-time ADA Coordinator
- Formalizing an ADA Departmental Liaison system
- Creating an ADA Advisory Group, Task Force, or Commission to meet regularly with the ADA Coordinator
- Having the ADA Advisory Group review the annual City budget to address the recommendations of the Plan
- Creating a system to track ADA requests from residents and tracking the progress of the requests

To date, the City has accomplished four of five of these recommendations, and this progress has driven a noticeable increase in understanding of the importance of accessibility and inclusivity.

In May 2023, a subcommittee of the Commission on Aging and Disabilities was created. This ADA Advisory Committee meets monthly to provide opportunities for focused discussions between residents of Evanston with a special interest in advocating for and promoting inclusion of individuals with disabilities, individuals who have a disability and wish to contribute their experiences and ideas, care partners, professionals working closely with the disability community in Evanston, and representatives of community groups and City Departments that address disability services. An official membership process was established in November 2023 and this group has been vital in establishing and supporting the City's newly established ADA/Disability Services. The Committee's work plan includes goals of increased member involvement in ADA Transition Plan project decisions which will allow for progress toward the Plan's recommendation of review of the City's ADA budget.

In June 2023, a newly created full time position, the Disability Rights & Advocacy Manager, was filled. This role includes designation of ADA Coordinator for the City. In addition to overseeing all aspects of ADA implementation, this individual is responsible for creating and maintaining communication processes for community members and City staff, developing disability

service-related policies and processes, developing and coordinating trainings for departmental staff, and managing the Parks & Recreation Department’s Disability and Advocacy Division.

A Disability Access Liaison Team was formed in September of 2023. This group includes staff representatives from various City departments and is dedicated to improving accessibility and inclusivity in all City programs, services, and activities. Liaisons provide expert knowledge related to the function and responsibilities of their departments and together with the Disability Rights & Advocacy Manager, work to address accommodation requests, inquiries, and grievances from the community. Additionally, the Team prioritizes projects aimed at fulfilling the recommendations included in the ADA Transition Plan.

The City’s ADA/Disability Services, including new accommodation request and inquiry/grievance procedures, were established in September 2023 and are included on the City website. This information was presented to the community during September’s City Council meeting and via press release in October. Additionally, all City staff have adopted the City’s new accessibility statement in their email signatures to allow for easier access to accommodation requests.

Construction Projects

The Capital Planning and Engineering Bureau completed updates on several intersections and driveways in fall 2023.

Location:	Work completed to meet ADA standards:
Northwest corner Brown Ave/Lee St	Lowered the keystone and added transition to existing sidewalk for west bound pedestrians
Oakton Street and Wesley Avenue	Reconstructed the sidewalk/ramps at all corners and reconstructed the pedestrian crosswalks
Oakton Street and Florence Avenue	Reconstructed the sidewalk/ramps and added pedestrian crosswalk at the west leg including bus stop pads
Oakton Street and Dodge Avenue	Reconstructed the sidewalk/ramps at all corners and upgraded the traffic signals
Oakton Street and Grey Avenue	Reconstructed the sidewalk/ramps and relocated the pedestrian crossing to the west leg
Oakton Street and Hartrey Avenue	Reconstructed the sidewalk/ramps and added pedestrian crosswalk at the west leg including bus stop pads
Oakton Street and Animal Shelter/Home Depot Driveway	Reconstructed the sidewalk/ramps at all corners and upgrading the traffic signals

Oakton Street and Shell Station/Quad Driveway	Reconstructed the sidewalk/ramps on the north, south and west legs and upgraded the traffic signals
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Public Right-Of-Way Access

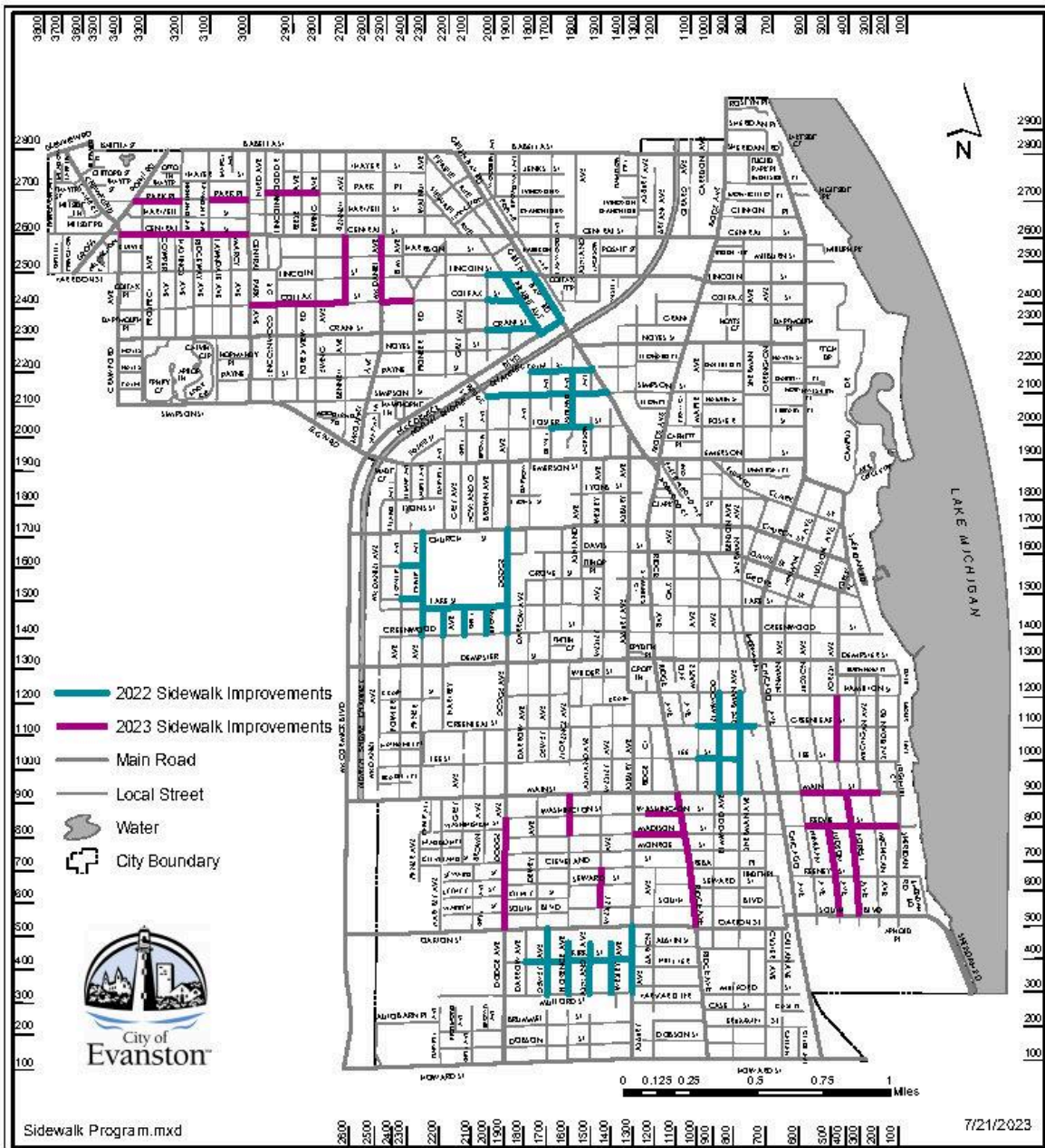
Included in the City’s 2022 ADA Transition Plan is input from online surveys provided to community members. Nearly 50% of respondents listed the rights-of-way needing the most attention. Accessible parking was noted as an additional priority for the community with 43% of survey respondents listing this as an element that is most important to update. The City places feedback from the community in highest regard, and new accessibility standards presented by the U.S. Access Board in August 2023 will have a great impact on rights-of-way planning in 2024 and beyond.

The U.S. Access Board’s final rule of PROWAG (Pedestrian Right Of Way Accessibility Guidelines) provides new scoping and technical requirements to ensure that sidewalks, curb ramps, on-street parking, driveways, intersection crossings, and pedestrian push buttons, in addition to other rights-of-way elements, are readily accessible and usable by pedestrians with disabilities. Steps have already been taken by various City departments to determine how these standards will affect our current plans.

The parking division of the City’s Administrative Services department completed an audit of accessible parking throughout the City in December 2023. This assessment divided the City’s on-street parking into North, Lakefront, South, and Downtown regions and also gathered information about City’s public parking lots to determine, based on PROWAG standards, where additional spots need to be placed. The next step in this process will include our Parking Services, Public Works, and Engineering teams creating a timeline to begin adding these accessible parking spots beginning in spring of 2024.

The City’s Sidewalk Improvement Program organizes project locations following an equitable priority system for rating sidewalk construction and replacement. It includes phases focused on meeting the community’s needs and reaching ADA program access. In 2023, the City removed and replaced 26,000 square feet of sidewalk. A map of the 2023 progress is included below.

Sidewalk Improvement Program



This map is provided "as is" without warranties of any kind. See www.cityofevanston.org/mapdisclaimers.html for more information.

Changes to City Programs, Services, and Activities

In an effort to make our Civic Center more accessible for visitors who may need mobility assistance, the facility began providing a transport wheelchair, located at the main entrance

security desk, for rental. This equipment can be reserved ahead of time or requested upon arrival.

Information and Signage

A City-wide Service Animal/Emotional Support Animal Policy was established in November of 2023. This policy sets clear guidelines based on the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) as well as Illinois law to ensure equal access for individuals with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal. It defines a service animal and distinguishes between service animals and emotional support animals.

Permanent sign holders were placed at all of the City's community centers in November 2023 which include various forms of contact information for individuals to make accommodation requests for City programs, services, and activities. Large print flyers are also included in these sign holders.

New signs were posted at Noyes Cultural Arts Center to communicate the route and location of the accessible entrance in December 2023.

Parks & Recreation Department

Increasing accessibility and inclusivity has been a top priority in the City's Parks & Recreation Department in 2023. With the formal addition of a Disability & Advocacy Division in May of 2023, expansion of programming and services for individuals with disabilities has been at the forefront of planning. Included in the Disability & Advocacy Division are Special Recreation programming and Inclusion Services.

Special Recreation programming has expanded to include opportunities for additional populations within the disability community. Activities specifically designed for adults with physical disabilities as well as early childhood program options were offered beginning in the summer season and expansion will continue in the future.

New Inclusion Policies were created in January 2023 with goals of:

- Providing opportunities for individuals with disabilities to participate safely and successfully alongside peers in the City of Evanston's Parks & Recreation programming
- Providing access to the goals, benefits, and overall experience that all participants in the program receive through reasonable, least restrictive accommodations
- Facilitating understanding, collaboration, and connections within all Parks & Recreation programming and within the community

Inclusion procedures promote increased family and team engagement and Inclusion Plans specifically designed around the unique abilities, goals, and needs of each participant.

The summer of 2023 brought an increase in beach accessibility for Evanston. Mobi-mats, or firm rollout access mats, were put in place at Lighthouse, Clark Street, Greenwood, Lee Street, South Boulevard, and Dempster Street beaches. Additionally, the City purchased beach wheelchairs which were available to borrow at several beaches.

Department-wide information was added to the Parks & Recreation website in December 2023 to clearly communicate the Department’s goals related to accessibility and inclusivity.

ADA/Disability Services Trainings

With the formation of the City’s Disability Access Liaison Team, departments have been able to develop a further understanding of the ADA Transition Plan. In November and December, the ADA Coordinator met individually with several City departments with goals of providing an increased awareness of the role of the ADA Coordinator, increasing about the City’s newly established ADA/Disability Services policies and procedures, identifying how each department fits in with the ADA Transition Plan, and to begin developing processes to include Transition Plan progress in staffs’ regular workflow.

ADA/Disability Services and Transition Plan Meetings	City Department:	Attendance:
	Public Works	7
	Community Development	5
	Parking Services	4

In October of 2023, an Emergency Preparedness Fair was held at Evanston Township High School. Aiming to bring awareness to man-made hazards and climate-related weather events, the event provided residents with tools they need to minimize risks, stay safe during emergencies, and improve community resilience. A Disability Access Tour was among the activities offered at this event and provided the opportunity for community members to join the Disability Rights & Advocacy Manager as well as the City’s Chair of the ADA Advisory Committee for unique perspectives on accessibility in Evanston. The Tour provided information about local organizations, groups, and locations that support the disability community, took an honest look at the work that still needs to be done for Evanston to achieve true accessibility and inclusivity, and identified current steps that are being taken to progress.

With the addition of the transport wheelchair rental at the Civic Center, nine of the City’s Facilities and Maintenance staff participated in an informational training about the equipment as well as the policies set to provide safe use for community members.

ADA Inquiries, Grievances, and Resolutions

Along with updates to policies, a new option was added to the City's ADA Grievance Procedures to encourage community feedback and suggestions related to accessibility. Community members are now able to communicate via email, phone, or electronic form and choose to make an inquiry (to share feedback/suggestions and requests for ADA alterations) or file a grievance (to share a situation in which an individual feels that discrimination has occurred.) The steps in place once receiving this communication are the same, with the Disability Rights & Advocacy Manager connecting with applicable City staff to come to a resolution. Below are the total number of inquiries, grievances, and resolutions communicated since the ADA Coordinator role was filled in June 2023.

Inquiries	20
Grievances	3
Grievance Resolutions	2
Resolutions Still in Progress	1