



Homer City Hall

491 E. Pioneer Avenue

Homer, Alaska 99603

www.cityofhomer-ak.gov

City of Homer Agenda

ADA Compliance Committee

Thursday, July 08, 2021 at 4:00 PM

City Hall Cowles Council Chambers via Zoom Webinar

Webinar ID: 998 6324 0301 Passcode: 404451

Dial: 1 253 215 8782 or 1 669 900 6833 or Toll Free 888 788 0099 or 877 853 5247

CALL TO ORDER, 4:00 P.M.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

PUBLIC COMMENTS FOR ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

RECONSIDERATION

SYNOPSIS APPROVAL

[A.](#) Minutes for the regular meeting on June 20, 2021 **p.3**

VISITORS

PENDING BUSINESS

A. Review of Findings for Parks, Trails & Campground Accessibility Review **Laydown**

[B.](#) Draft Parks, Campgrounds and Trails Transition Plan **p. 9**

NEW BUSINESS

A. Next Steps in Performing Accessibility Compliance Review

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

[A.](#) News Article Patch, April 19, 2021 Columbia, Maryland Nonverbal Communication
Boards Installed At New HoCo Playground **p. 20**

COMMENTS OF THE AUDIENCE

COMMENTS OF CITY STAFF

COMMENTS OF THE COMMITTEE

ADJOURNMENT

Next Regular Meeting is Thursday, August 12, 2021, at 4:00 p.m. All meetings scheduled to be held in the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska.

Session 21-04, a Regular Meeting of the ADA Compliance Committee was called to order by Acting Chair Joyanna Geisler at 4:17 p.m. on June 10, 2021, via Zoom Webinar from the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska. There is one vacancy on the Committee.

PRESENT: DONNA ADERHOLD, ROGER CLYNE, JOYANNA GEISLER

DAVID LEWIS, COMMISSIONER, PARKS, ART, RECREATION & CULTURE (PARC) ADVISORY COMMISSION

ABSENT: PAM VANHOOZER

STAFF: MELISSA JACOBSEN, CITY CLERK

AGENDA APPROVAL

Acting Chair Geisler requested a motion to approve the agenda.

ADERHOLD MOVED TO APPROVE THE AGENDA.

There was no discussion.

VOTE. NON-OBJECTION. UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENTS UPON MATTERS ALREADY ON THE AGENDA

RECONSIDERATION

There were no items scheduled.

SYNOPSIS APPROVAL

A. Regular Meeting Minutes of May 13, 2021

Acting Chair Geisler requested a motion to approve the minutes.

CLYNE/ADERHOLD MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF MAY 13, 2021.

There was no discussion.

VOTE. NON-OBJECTION. UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

VISITORS/PRESENTATIONS

Homer Wayfinding & Streetscape - Discovery Days presented by Deputy City Planner Julie Engebretsen

Deputy City Planner Engebretsen introduced herself providing a brief orientation on the development of the City Wayfinding and Streetscape Plan and the importance that accessibility is included in the development of that plan. She additionally stated that she learned the importance of the placement of benches within the community. Ms. Engebretsen provided information on the upcoming meeting later this evening, June 10, 2021 regarding the findings from the various pop up meetings conducted by the Consultant, Corvus Design and invited the Committee members to attend that meeting.

Deputy City Planner Engebretsen responded to the question on initial take-aways from the walk through stating that the opportunity to display a map of the city at Baycrest which is a perfect opportunity to let visitors know that there is more than the Spit to see while in Homer and likewise there is nothing at the Spit to advise visitors that there are things to see in town.

Discussion ensued on relating additional efforts being made to identify accessible hotels and businesses in Homer, and the difficulties in traveling with mobility issues and working towards making visitors and residents experience more comfortable.

Committee member Clyne inquired about the availability of the Trails Map that was provided.

Deputy City Planner Engebretsen stated that this map was a group effort issued in 2014 and there was not the desire to provide the funding to produce more of those maps.

David Lewis, Chair of the Parks, Art Recreation & Culture Advisory Commission provided information on the efforts of the Parks Department to upgrade the trails maps with QR codes to make it easier for visitors and residents.

Deputy City Planner Engebretsen explained that the Wayfinding and Streetscape Plan is to develop templates for signage consistency for public trailheads through shuttle bus stops, benches, garbage cans, etc., so that it is obvious when traveling through the community what is a public access point. While having the QR codes and a website behind it is great but having a marker designating a public trail is where we need to get to as a community.

Further discussion was facilitated on the following points:

- Cruise ship passengers use of the Poop Deck Trail
- Knowing which trails are accessible and how to get from point A to point B
- Making Routes for Recreational Vehicles and other levels of accessibility to include businesses
- Sticker or sign to mark level of accessibility

PENDING BUSINESS

- A. ADA Transition Plan - Parks, Trails & Campgrounds Draft
- - ADA Transition Plan - Parks, Trails & Campgrounds
 - - 2010 ADA Regulations Chapter 10 Recreation Facilities
 - - Play Areas Checklist

- - Play Areas Accessibility Guidelines
- - Fishing Piers and Platforms(limited applicability)
- - Sports Activities, Team or Player Seating (Benches)

Acting Chair Geisler introduced the item by reading of the title and commented that she appreciated the introduction of the ADA background, community involvement and noted the highlighted sections requiring information.

Member Aderhold agreed and those sections would be completed when they did their fieldwork and noted that Deputy City Clerk Krause had found a template online and felt that it was appropriate to use for their Transition Plan and requested feedback from the Committee on the format of the document since it was quite different than that of the previous transition plan document. Once they have the new data the Committee can make necessary changes.

Commissioner Lewis inquired what the Committee would like from the PARC Commission to do, perform assessments on trails, Hornaday Park and the campgrounds.

Acting Chair Geisler stated that it would be preferred to have a committee of some folks with mobility issues and members of the Committee plus the Parks Commission and Staff, since it would be beneficial to have a small committee to help with taking pictures, using the measuring tape, level, etc.

Acting Chair Geisler explained the need to establish dates for the team to perform the assessments and once this exercise is completed the ADA Committee will not be visiting the parks on a regular basis but the Parks Commission would be and it would be beneficial to have the Commission's participation to have some understanding in continuing ADA Compliance in the future with the city Parks and Trails.

Additional points made were as follows:

- Joint visits to parks and trails by the members of the PARC Advisory Commission and the ADA Committee to conduct ADA Compliance reviews
- Continued review and observation in the future in regards to ADA Compliance by the PARC Commission
- Findings during participation during the last transition plan by PARC Commissioner Lewis
- How to actually conduct the measurements on parks and trails
- Ability of members of the Committee, end users to participate in the surveys
- Parks Superintendent Steffy should be invited to participate on any surveys

City Clerk Jacobsen inquired if the Committee was at the point that they were ready to schedule those surveys.

A brief discussion was facilitated by Acting Chair Geisler with input from Member Aderhold on holding the discussion on scheduling under item B of Pending Business.

B. Prioritizing City of Homer Parks, Trails & Campgrounds in Preparation for ADA Compliance Self-Evaluation

Acting Chair Geisler introduced the item by reading of the title. She then reviewed the content of the Memorandum from Deputy City Clerk Krause and the requested action from the Committee.

Acting Chair Geisler confirmed that they were ready to prioritize the listed parks, campgrounds and trails.

Member Aderhold requested input from PARC Commissioner Lewis on the listing in regards to if any trails or parks were missing from the list.

Commissioner Lewis noted that the following:

- Calvin & Coyle Trail but he believed that those were under the Land Trust
- Reber Trail – it was determined at a prior meeting that this trail was not accessible
And there is no way to make it accessible

Acting Chair Geisler read the listing of parks, trails and campgrounds to be prioritized for the record:

-

Member Aderhold noted that there are parks on the list that have trails associated with them, such as Karen Hornaday Park and questioned if they should look at them together or should they be listed under the trails category.

Acting Chair Geisler recommended including the trail and campgrounds with the park to get them done together.

There was consensus to include the related campgrounds and trails with the Park.

Member Aderhold agreed that degree of use was a good method to prioritize the lists.

Commissioner Lewis stated that Bishop's Beach, Karen Hornaday, Mariner Park, Fishing Lagoon Campground, Poopdeck Trail, Story book Trail/Walk.

Acting Chair Geisler reviewed the list as stated by Commissioner Lewis.

Member Aderhold requested clarification on prioritize the parks, campgrounds and trails within each classification or do they want to prioritize everything. She advocated for prioritizing the parks and everything related to those parks, but noted that it would take more than one visit to cover everything at Karen Hornaday Park. She responded to Acting Chair Geisler that they should just decide on how to work through the process.

Acting Chair Geisler inquired if they should just pick a couple of parks, a couple of campgrounds and a trail to provide them with a start and get some additional experience.

Members Aderhold and Clyne were in agreement with that plan.

Member Aderhold recommended that they start with Bishop's Beach then Karen Hornaday and review everything associated with those two parks, she believe that would provide them with a good start.

Member Clyne requested clarification on the location of the Storybook Trail.

Commissioner Lewis provided the location, from the Library parking lot to the Poopdeck Trail through that lot next to the Library.

Commissioner Lewis asked if they were ready to select a date.

Member Aderhold recommended selecting a range of dates and then confirmed the advertising requirements with City Clerk Jacobsen. She suggested the week of June 28, 2021.

A discussion ensued on narrowing down a date during the week of June 28, 2021 and if that did not work for everyone they can look at the week of July 11, 2021. It was narrowed down to Thursday, July 1, 2021 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. at Bishop's Beach Park.

Acting Chair Geisler will contact a few members of the public that may have an interest in attending, Commissioner Lewis will bring the request to the PARC Advisory Commissioners at their June 17th meeting and City Clerk Jacobsen will send the information to Public Works Staff.

Member Aderhold reminded those in attendance that they will be looking at the trails associated with Bishop's Beach and that when they were working on the previous transition plan, they were unsure under whose jurisdiction that those trails were under, the City or Fish & Game. She will reach out to Fish & Game to invite them to participate at the suggestion of Commissioner Lewis.

NEW BUSINESS

INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS

- A. Memorandum from ADA Compliance Committee re: Ordinance to Create and Fund ADA Compliance Small Works Program

Member Aderhold responded to Acting Chair Geisler's question noting this item was on the last agenda and Public Works Director Keiser had requested recommendation of support from the Committee on her Small Works Program that she would be presenting to City Council.

COMMENTS OF THE AUDIENCE

City Manager Dumouchel commented that they did not have that specific program included in the budget however there were several ADA Compliance projects included in the Capital Improvement Plan, airport improvements and ramp at city hall. The City recently applied for 2022 capital assistance program funds from the State of Alaska and if they do receive it they will be applying it towards those projects.

Commissioner Lewis had no comments but will present it to the Parks Art Recreation & Culture Advisory Commission.

COMMENTS OF THE CITY STAFF

City Clerk Jacobsen apologized for the login mix up and promised it will go better once Renee was back. She responded to the question of in-person meetings and the best person to contact regarding what has been done previously by the ADA for Member Clyne.

COMMENTS OF THE COMMITTEE

Acting Chair Geisler commented on the availability of attending the ADA Symposium which is also being held virtually as well as in person in Phoenix, Arizona in August.

Member Clyne asked when in-person meetings would resume for the Committee. He also requested if he could contact someone and get some information and up to speed.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Committee the meeting adjourned at 5:17 p.m. The next regular meeting is scheduled for Thursday, July 8, 2021 at 4:00 p.m. at the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers via Zoom Webinar located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska.

RENEE KRAUSE, MMC, DEPUTY CITY CLERK/ADA COORDINATOR

Approved: _____

American's with Disabilities Act Transition Plan

Parks & Trails



Acknowledgements

Mayor & City Council

Ken Castner, Mayor
 Donna Aderhold
 Caroline Venuti
 Heath Smith
 Rachel Lord, Mayor Pro Tem
 Joey Evensen
 Storm Hansen – Cavasos

ADA Compliance Committee

Joyanna Geisler
 Pam Van Hoozer
 Roger Clyne
 Donna Aderhold

Parks Arts Recreation & Culture Advisory Commission Representatives

Deb Lowney
 Dave Lewis

Interested Community Members

City of Homer Staff

Renee Krause, MMC, Deputy City Clerk/ADA Coordinator
 Owen Meyer, Asset Management Coordinator

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1.0 Introduction

The American's with Disabilities Act (ADA) Title II Transition Plan for Parks and Trails describes barriers to access Homer's parks and trails and the priorities and methods that will be used to remove those access barriers. This effort will supplement earlier work completed by the City to fulfill the requirements in Title II of the ADA.

In 2016, the City initiated drafting a Transition Plan, which identified the ADA coordinator, evaluated communications, and other city facilities, developed a dispute process and modifications request. It also began the audit process with the evaluation of sidewalks, parking areas and curb ramps.

The plan identified that future audits of parks and trails along with facilities would need to occur. This Parks and Trails ADA Transition Plan and the planned Facilities Transition Plan will be integrated into a single overall report after completion of the Parks and Trails Transition Plan in 2022.

The American Community Survey (ACS) in May 2021 estimates the overall rate of people with disabilities in the US population is around 25.6 percent. The data shows that disability increases with age, for people 65 and over. In Alaska, the numbers reported having a disability were overall were 12.6 percent. It was reported that 28.9% of Alaska residents had some form of disability. In Homer 19.5 percent of residents are over the age of 65. In short, hundreds of people in our community face disabilities and many of those use Homer's parks, trails and programs on a regular basis. Homer's Mission is to be a dynamic community where all can live, play, work and invest. To make that mission a reality, it needs to be accessible. The City of Homer owns and manages 17 parks, comprised of over 520 acres of land, along with 5.41 miles of maintained trails. These range from small pocket parks and multi-use trails to forested natural areas and sports fields. To ensure our park and trail system is accessible to all, the City undertook the development of an ADA Parks and Trails Transition Plan in 2021 – 2022.

1.1 ADA Background

The American's with Disabilities Act is a civil rights law that requires all state and local governments to provide equal access to programs and services for all community members. It was signed into law by President George H.W. Bush on July 26, 1990 and went into effect in 1992. The ADA is a landmark civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in access to jobs, public accommodations, government services, and programs, public transportation, and telecommunications. The ADA treats access as a civil right.

Title I of the ADA prohibits private employers, state and local governments, employment agencies and labor unions from discriminating against qualified individuals with disabilities in job application procedures, hiring, firing, advancement, compensation, job training, and other

terms, conditions, and privileges of employment. The City of Homer is an Equal Employment Opportunity (EU) employer and adheres to the requirements of Title I.

Title II of the ADA adopts the general prohibitions against discrimination contained in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, but applies to all state and local governments, regardless of whether or not they receive federal funding. It prohibits the City from denying persons with disabilities the equal opportunity to participate in its services, programs or activities, either directly or indirectly through contractual arrangements. It is the policy of the City of Homer to make every reasonable effort to provide equal access to all City facilities, services, programs, and activities for citizens with disabilities in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

Title III applies to public accommodations, which include businesses open to the public and requires them to make reasonable modifications to accommodate individuals with disabilities.

1.2 Community Involvement

Community involvement is a priority of Homer and an essential part of the ADA requirements. The City is required to involve the public in the evaluation and prioritization process. To ensure the community had various ways to engage meetings were held via electronic means and the public was invited to attend and participate in the facilities review and audit.

2.0 Regulatory Standards and Guidance

2.1 Audit Standards

Two sets of federal guidelines were applied to the Parks and Trails access audits. The first is the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG), also known as the 1991 standards, which addresses entries, doors, service counters, showers, curb cuts on trails and within parks, and other typical building elements. The Access Board is responsible for developing and updating these design guidelines. The second is 2010 Standards for Accessible Design that include requirements for playgrounds, golf courses, fishing areas, boating areas and more.

This is an important distinction between the 1991 and 2010 standards since the City could be granted safe harbor if a building was built or altered to be compliant with the 1991 standards. Safe harbor states that buildings that meet the 1991 standards would not be required make further changes until the elements were subject to a planned renovation.

Certain parks elements do not yet have a final standard, these include trails, picnic areas, and outdoor elements such as grills. On these elements, the Outdoor Developed Areas Guidelines (ODAG) were used. The appended reports cite both the ADAAG, 2010 Standards and the Outdoor Developed Areas Guidelines.

This report identifies the barriers and performance-based solutions in the form of project recommendations. Some of these projects will require further design prior to implementation.

All improvements will require maintenance over time to ensure continued compliance with ADA

2.2 Transition Plan Requirements

ADA requires community involvement in the development of the Transition plan and it must include the following features:

- A list of physical barriers that limit accessibility of programs or activities to individuals with disabilities, this is also called a self-evaluation.
- A detailed description of the methods that will be used to make is accessible.
- The official responsible for implementation of the plan.
- A timeline for corrections.

The Transition Plan timeline is designed to provide flexibility to the City around specific parks, campgrounds and trails ensuring that continuous access improvements are being made.

2.3 Program Access Recommendations

The US Department of Justice test for existing facilities is known as the program access test. A program is an opportunity made available by the individual department, in this case Public Works Parks department. A program is not just an activity for which a person registers and pays a fee. It can be the program of picnicking, parking or fishing. It is a program if it is an activity made available by the Public Works Parks department.

The program access test does not apply to new construction or alterations and additions. New construction, alterations or additions must be designed and constructed to comply with the 2010 Standards for Accessible Design.

There are multiple ways in which a program can be made accessible. In Title II regulations, Section 35.150(b) describes the methods an entity can use to make programs accessible. They include:

- Redesign or acquisition of equipment;
- Move program to accessible buildings;
- Assignment of aides to program beneficiaries;
- Delivery of services at alternate accessible sites;
- Alteration of existing facilities and construction of new facilities;
- Use of accessible rolling stock or other conveyances; and
- Any other methods that result in making its services, programs and activities readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities.

The program access recommendations are based on a minimum of one out of three assets should be accessible. All unique assets should be accessible. Examples of this in Homer would be _____.

Some barriers, identified in the site reports as “City Option” will not need to be change until a renovation or rebuild based on technical infeasibility, historical preservation, construction tolerance or no current guidance is available.

3.0 Methodology

The methodology of this portion of the transition plan included the following elements:

3.1 Access Audits

Members of the ADA Compliance Committee, Public Works Staff, members of the Parks, Arts, Recreation & Culture Advisory Commission, Alaska Department of Fish & Game and interested community members conducted audits for _____ parks (Appendix A) and _____miles of trails. These audits were conducted the weeks of _____. The following were not included in these audits due to_____:

-
-
-

The audits consist of an overall site report and individual checklists that cover parking, exterior accessible routes, means of access, play area, shelters and picnic areas, outdoor recreation and park site.

The overall site report for each park facility includes a description of the specific barriers at each location and reference to the regulation or guideline citation. In addition, they contain digital images of the barriers and reference a map showing location (if appropriate) of the barrier.

The site reports describe the Title II 35.150 (b) methods for meeting accessibility requirements, giving priority to those methods that offer services, activities and programs in the most integrated setting that include recommendations for addressing the barrier.

3.2 Findings

The access audits identified _____access deficits across the system. This represents **a better than average, average or below average** number of access deficits, meaning Parks and Trails are **more, less** accessible than many communities. To effectively and efficiently improve accessibility they were prioritized over a _____year timeline to ensure program access. The prioritized list includes _____barriers to access.

Projects were prioritized using Department of Justice (DOJ) guidance which considers the following priorities.

1. Accessible approach and entry (parking, accessible routes)
2. Access to programs and services
3. Access to Restrooms
4. Access to other items (drinking fountains, trash receptacles etc.)

Based on community involvement (survey responses, public comment or participation) access to restrooms was considered a higher priority than programs and services and the subsequent plan reflects community involvement.

4.0 Transition Plan

The access audits identified _____ access deficits across the system. To effectively and efficiently improve accessibility they were prioritized over a ____-year timeline to ensure program access. The prioritized list includes _____ barriers to access.

This prioritization of the projects within the Parks, Campgrounds and Trails Transition Plan was accomplished through a community involvement process, collaboration with the ADA Compliance Committee members, Parks & Recreation Staff and Parks, Arts, Recreation & Culture Advisory Commissioners and the Alaska Department of Fish & Game. This work sought to identify the most efficient and effective way to make parks and trails more accessible. The prioritization focused on approximately _____ of the deficiencies that could be addressed in the recommended _____-year timeframe while working on program access.

These priorities focused on which parks, campgrounds and trails were most important to improve accessibility, evaluating which deficiencies to correct first for the most benefit in overall parks and trails access. Lastly, that all program types are accessible somewhere within the system.

The transition plan works toward this goal with the expectation that any new construction will be fully compliant and help the department move over time to a completely accessible parks system.

Insert chart listing of prioritized barriers, projects to correct and estimated project costs to remedy and who or how they should be remedied and a timeline

5.0 Cost Estimating and Financing

5.1 Cost Estimating

The timeline for this work outlined in the Transition Plan is _____ years (insert written years), which takes advantage of the biennial budgeting process the City follows. Initial work has been focused on improved cost estimates for the projects undertaken in the _____ biennium and a five-year proposed project list. Maintenance and smaller capital projects would occur in the _____ biennium and the detailed development of budget offers would be written and

submitted over the next three (yr # to yr #) biennia. More detailed cost estimates for future projects would be developed for those budget offers. Any new construction undertaken is required to be fully accessible.

Upon completion of the prioritization, cost estimating with construction management, park maintenance operations, and park planning was done to further understand the project groupings and how we might contract for certain work (curb ramps for instance at multiple parks) vs. a discrete set of access projects at a single park. Original cost estimates were based on RS Means data from _____ and related to construction only (no design or project costs). These numbers were reviewed by _____ and revised with a multiplier to bring to 2022 cost estimates. Additional work on costs will occur leading up to budget offer development in the spring of 20____ for the 20__ - ____ biennium.

Potential cost savings may be realized from strategic scaling of contracts. Analysis of the project list identified 6 major types of work that include the following six trades or project types:

Parking/Paving/Concrete

Labor

Plumbing

Electrical

Signage

Potential CIP Project

Further costing will evaluate opportunities to do multiple projects across the park or trail system, such as all sign upgrades.

5.2 Funding

There is no dedicated source of federal funds for accessibility renovations to existing sites. The work will be done through three main channels. Maintenance and repair, small capital projects and Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) projects. Current CIP projects will be reviewed to see if they may be amended to capture additional access improvements. An example of this might be the _____ (location). Additionally, funded projects will be fully accessible, such as _____ (*list park or trail*), slated to begin construction in 20____. This will increase the available number of accessible playgrounds and trails. Lastly, the City can look at grant funding and other sources that could help implement some of this work, but ADA modifications are common, and grants will be competitive. Some opportunities may be available through the following:

- Community Development Block Grant Funds: Many agencies receive federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds for accessibility renovations at existing sites. CDBG funds often have a scale of priority. It is important to establish accessibility as a priority for CDBG applications.
- State/Federal Grant Programs such as the Land & Water Conservation Fund, The Great American Outdoors Act; Community Facilities Direct Loan & Grant Program in Alaska, or Recreational Trails Program

- State Appropriations: The City has successfully competed for appropriations for larger projects and if offered by the State would be an avenue for funding.
- Other Grant Opportunities: The Fruit Tree Planting Foundation Grant Program - Municipal entities, local nonprofits and public schools are eligible to apply to support the planting of fruitful trees and plants to alleviate hunger, combat global warming, strengthen communities and improve the surrounding environment. Trees can be planted at community gardens, city and state parks, low-income neighborhoods, Native American reservations, schools, and other locations where they will serve the greater community. The Foundation provides high-quality trees and shrubs, equipment, on-site orchard design expertise and oversight, horticultural workshops, and aftercare training and manuals. Applications are accepted on an ongoing basis.

6.0 Recommendations

In addition to the audit findings, opportunities to improve accessibility via policies and procedures were identified through the self-evaluation. The following recommendations are not an exhaustive policy review, but highlighting best practices based on discussions with staff, ADA Compliance Committee members, PARC Commissioners and interested members of the community.

1. Implement modifications according to the approach proposed in Section 4.0 and the Transition Plan to accommodate all users.
2. Adopt a policy regarding the use of Other Power-Driven Mobility Devices (OPDMD) at _____ sites and promote that policy to the public.
3. Develop maintenance staff training and checklists to improve accessibility during routine maintenance. Items such accessible routes, gaps, changes in level, door closing force and common obstructions can be part of ongoing routine maintenance work.
4. Create an inter-departmental staff team, with representatives from each department to regularly meet and coordinate on ADA and accessibility issues.
5. Update website with more details regarding ADA access at each park. This would include parking and restroom accessibility along with what is accessible and lengths of accessible trails, so park patrons can make informed decisions before traveling to the park.
6. Continue to improve accessibility at special events by creating maps with ADA features (parking, accessible routes) and ensuring access to various programs that occur during the event.
7. Work towards creating one overall transition plan for the City with Public Right of Way (PROW), parks and trails and city facilities prioritized in an overall list.

- 331 8. Ensure all contracts have language regarding modifications that contractor will
- 332 make to provide equal access to services, programs and activities.
- 333 9. Improve wayfinding signage so people with disabilities can more easily and
- 334 conveniently navigate the park system.
- 335 10. If portable toilets are provided at a park site, make sure at least one is accessible.

Kids & Family

Nonverbal Communication Boards Installed At New HoCo Playground

The boards include braille and are designed to encourage a sense of community and an inclusive, more equitable play area environment.

By Kristin Danley-Greiner, Patch Staff
Apr 19, 2021 12:43 pm EDT

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The 300-acre park's Play for All playground is set to open this spring. (Photo Courtesy of the Howard County Government)

HOWARD COUNTY, MD — Two innovative nonverbal communication boards have been installed at Blandair Regional Park’s new “Play for All” playground. The boards, which were partially funded by the Howard County Autism Society, allow nonverbal children to communicate without the use of personal augmentative and alternative communication devices. The 300-acre park’s Play for All playground is set to open this spring.

To use the communication boards, children point to pictures on the display to express their thoughts and feelings. The symbols on the board were taken from a communication product called TouchChat and were selected by speech-language pathologists specifically for use on playgrounds. The boards, which also include braille, are designed to encourage a sense of community as well as an inclusive, more equitable play environment, according to Howard County Executive Calvin Ball.

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“Howard County is constantly working towards creating a more inclusive community, for all,” Ball said. “These communication boards are a welcome addition to this state-of-the-art park and will allow for more of our children of all abilities to have a positive experience at our playground.”

The county had eight other communication boards installed at Waverly, Cedar Lane, Bellows Spring, Clarksville, Dayton Oaks, Ilchester, Pointers Run and Rockburn Elementary School last year. The 3 x 5-foot boards were made possible through special funding from the HCAS and fabricated by sign manufacturer Sharma & Associates.

“Our new playground at Blandair Park was designed from the ground up to be a space where every child feels welcome. With amenities like these communication boards, Blandair Park will serve as a model for how our parks can and should be built with every member of our community in mind,” Howard County Recreation & Parks Director Raul Delorme said.

Katie Gandy, a 10-year veteran autism mom and Howard County Autism Society Board Member, said she "couldn't be more proud of our community and its pioneering vision to address the needs of everyone in our community.”

"This inclusive playground at Blandair Park is going to revolutionize the way families with disabled family members are able to play and interact within our community. It provides them with an inclusive, judgement-free zone to allow our children to play just like their peers," she said.

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