



Annual Report on Accessibility in County Facilities

October 2021

OVERVIEW

2021 marks the 31st anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), landmark federal civil rights law to guarantee fair access to all public facilities, services, and amenities. Increasing access to County public facilities has been a crucial part of the County's commitment, on the part of the President and the Board of Commissioners, to expanding equitable opportunities and access to our health, public safety, and other vital services. As part of those ongoing and increasing efforts, the Board requested annual updates on the status and ongoing efforts of the County toward expanding accessibility, not just with compliance with the ADA but with an eye toward full equity of access for all.

Since December, 2010, the Offices Under the President have been undertaking the significant challenge of updating the legacy of approximately 19 million square feet of space to appropriate levels of compliance. The majority of Cook County's facilities were built prior to 1991, when the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements applicable to government facilities went into effect. While code-compliant at the time of their construction, many of these facilities have conditions that are now identified as barriers to the disabled.

The County owns, leases, and operates a wide variety of facilities, so there is a wide range of challenges. These facilities are grouped into three portfolios, Health and Hospitals, Public Safety, and Corporate Facilities. They include Stroger and Provident hospitals, the Oak Forest Hospital campus, the County's community health clinics, the Cook County Jail, a dozen suburban and specialty courthouses, various community public safety agency facilities, two Loop office buildings, three large warehouses, and five highway or vehicle service facilities.

Initially, when the President took office, individual projects were undertaken to address what user agencies felt were their most urgent needs for accessibility, including for example a series of renovations at our courthouses to provide access and building entry from the parking areas. A more comprehensive pursuit of compliance started with the

development of the Real Estate Asset Strategic Realignment Plan (REASRP, completed in 2014). The REASRP identified accessibility needs across all portfolios. It identified which County buildings need renovation, for reasons including compliance and efficiency, and which should be replaced.

Since then, the County has completed at least a dozen renovation and new building projects to increase accessibility at the Department of Corrections campus. Localized ADA renovation projects completed at the DOC to date total more than \$11 million. For new construction, the \$97 million Residential Treatment Unit (RTU) at the DOC, completed in 2015, provides accessible housing to compensate for several existing housing units on the campus that could not structurally be retrofitted to full accessibility.

Other highlights in the Health and Hospitals portfolio include the creation of the new Professional Building addition to Stroger Hospital, completed 2018, and the new Belmont Cragin Health Center, completed in 2021, both of which are also fully accessible.

POLICY ROADMAP

The Cook County Policy Roadmap, issued by the Office of the President in 2018, identifies multiple policy directions that require continuous improvements to accessibility across all County facilities. Specific policies that align with goals for achieving and maintaining full accessibility include but are not limited to:

Vital Communities, Objective 1:

1.1 Ensure equitable and inclusive policies and practices for recipients of Cook County resources.

Open Communities, Objective 1:

1.1 Make all Cook County services accessible to residents with disabilities and non-English speakers.

In implementing these policies, the County is also seeking to apply the principles of universal design in projects, to take a whole-building approach to accessibility.

IMPLEMENTATION APPROACH

The Department of Capital Planning and Policy (DCPP) has undertaken a series of studies, designs, and construction projects, to prioritize and address accessibility needs. This has been implemented through a **four-pronged strategy** to improve accessibility

across Cook County's three capital portfolios (Corporate, Public Safety, and Health and Hospitals).

1. Execute capital projects in response to reported accessibility deficiencies or challenges

DCPP has received and addressed reports or requests that identify specific needs for accessibility upgrades in County facilities.

- One was the 2015 US Department of Justice (DOJ) Barriers Report, which indicated specific ADA challenges on the Department of Corrections (DOC) Campus. In response, DCPP began implementing numerous accessibility upgrade projects.
- Additionally, DCPP was notified by the judiciary in Fall 2018 that a disabled judge would be seated at the Skokie Courthouse in December of that year; Board-approved funds in that year's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for countywide ADA upgrades in the Public Safety portfolio allowed DCPP to expeditiously complete the first phase of that improvement. After the initial expedited accommodation by DFM, DCPP, working with the Office of the Chief Judge and other justice stakeholders, has developed a new courtroom at the Skokie Courthouse, providing full accessibility not just for the judge but also for all courtroom participants. That project will start construction in FY 2021 with completion in FY 2022. It is expected to serve as a test case for similar upgrades at other courthouses.

2. Develop comprehensive accessibility assessments to determine project needs

For example, DCPP requested multiple large-scale ADA assessment projects in the Public Safety portfolio to be approved by the Board as part of the FY2021 CIP:

- To capture needs not included in the above-referenced DOJ Barriers report or the various localized upgrades already completed, in FY 2021 DCPP will issue an RFQ to contract design professionals to provide a wrap-around ADA assessment of all buildings at the DOC Campus.
- Assessment RFQs are also in development for the Leighton Criminal Courthouse, Daley Center, and at the outlying Courthouses. These assessments will provide the County a wrap-around look at accessibility needs across the whole Public Safety portfolio. Similar efforts are underway for the Corporate Portfolio.

3. Incorporate accessibility improvements within standard renovation projects

All three capital portfolios contain projects that redevelop or renovate existing spaces across the County. DCPP makes it a priority to address accessibility deficiencies or concerns in such renovation projects to bring those areas up to current ADA standards.

- For example, in the Corporate Portfolio, the County is undertaking a multi-year, multi-floor renovation of the County Building (118 N. Clark), the result of the need to provide a fully accessible Board Room.
- The County is also conducting a multi-floor re-stack of both the County Building and the Dunne Building (69 W. Washington).

Each of those re-stack projects will result in ADA upgrades to those floors (as noted below under the Corporate Portfolio overview).

4. Develop large-scale capital program initiatives

Countywide initiatives will help define the need, usage, and provide alternative future directions for the Public Safety Portfolio; these major programs will also result in new or significantly upgraded accessibility at many County facilities:

- Multiple operational improvements projects at the Cook County Jail, including an expanded visitors center/screening and program support facility, all of which are being implemented in parallel.
- Court Utilization Phase I and II, which will be implemented via the subsequent Court Facilities Improvements Plan

Looking forward, DCPP will expand upon the above projects to create a roadmap to future ADA accessible capital developments across all portfolios. Professional services will be required as annual budgets are approved to provide interpretation and guidance.

Below are highlights of projects with accessibility-related scope across the Public Safety, Corporate, and Public Health Portfolios. In addition, DCPP is in the process of hiring a new ADA Project Director, who will be responsible for the development of a County-wide facilities accessibility policy and oversee all ADA and ADA-impacted capital projects.

PROJECTS

Public Safety Portfolio

In the FY2021 CIP, there are 56 projects in the Public Safety Portfolio that are either ADA-specific or ADA-involved, totaling a projected value of \$42,508,875.

As noted, the County is in the process of procuring professional services to perform two large, multi-facility “wraparound” accessibility assessments, one for the over 50 individual structures at the DOC campus and one for thirteen courthouses. These assessments will give the County a comprehensive view of compliance needs for approximately 11 million square feet of space, more than half of the County’s entire inventory.

In the annual Capital Improvement Plan, developed under the President and approved by the Board of Commissioners, ADA upgrades and compliance projects constitute the highest priority for ongoing Capital projects, along with life safety and security. The following is a list of FY2021 CIP Projects, current year budgets and current status, incorporating ADA design approaches:

- Seventeen (17) Projects in Evaluation \$8,597,500
- Three (3) Projects in Planning \$185,000
- Twenty One (21) Projects in Procurement \$8,887,000
- Four (4) Projects in Design \$1,175,000
- Five (5) Projects in Construction \$10,427,000
- Six (6) Projects in Closeout \$13,247,375

Corporate Facilities Portfolio

In the FY2021 CIP, there are 41 projects in the Corporate portfolio that are either ADA-specific or ADA-involved, totaling a projected value of \$39,570,342.

The need for the accessible replacement of the 5th Floor Board Room (while providing space to keep all functions open and operating) requires multiple full- or partial-floor renovations of the County Building. Similarly, there is the need to consolidate County functions in the Dunne Building to free floor space to be more efficient in our operations. These re-stack projects (over a half-dozen floors between the two buildings) will also result in full accessibility for each new or renovated office area.

At the same time, the County Building is receiving a complete renovation and upgrade to its elevators. That work is under construction and includes upgraded and fully compliant cab controls, hallway lanterns and cab arrival annunciators, dwell time reprogramming, floor signage for those with visual challenges, etc.

There are also multiple upgrades to various entrances to in the downtown campus recently completed or underway, including pedway access to the Dunne Building from the Daley Center, a new ADA entry to the Dunne Building, on Washington Street, and pedway access to the Daley Center from the County Building and the CTA Blue Line. The following is a list of FY2021 CIP Projects, current year budgets and current status, incorporating ADA design approaches:

- Fifteen (10) Projects in Planning - \$2.275MM
- Six (6) Projects in Procurement - \$2.821MM
- Thirteen (13) Projects in Design - \$24.124MM
- Seven (7) Projects in Construction or Complete - \$10.350MM

Health and Hospitals Portfolio

In the FY2021 CIP, there are 8 projects that are either ADA-specific or ADA-involved projects, totaling a projected \$19,900,000.

This portfolio includes a mixture of ambulatory, inpatient, and administrative spaces with differing accessibility needs and requirements. Every project is designed and built to meet the ADA Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG) for their facility needs. For example, increased door widths and toileting facilities are provided at facilities with a historically higher proportion of bariatric patients. The installation of wall supports in exam rooms to install accessible cabinets for disabled healthcare providers is another such example. This approach ensures that ADA is factored early-on into the design phase, which reduces potential costs that would result in incorporating these necessities later in a project schedule.

Current project examples include the new Provident Renal Dialysis Center, J.H. Stroger Door and Hardware Replacement, Harrison Square Tenant Build-out and New Provident Hospital. The following is a list of FY2021 CIP Projects, current year budgets and current status, incorporating ADA design approaches:

- Three (3) projects in Closeout \$1.4MM
- Two (2) projects in Construction \$11.6MM
- Two (2) projects in Design \$6.4MM
- One (1) project in Design Procurement \$0.5MM

ESTABLISHMENT OF COOK COUNTY DISABILITY ADVISORY WORKING GROUP

Background:

The Office of the President convened the Disability Advisory Working Group as part of larger equity and inclusion initiatives from the President and the Board of Commissioners. The Working Group is part of efforts to increase diversity of access to County services, facilities, information, support, and opportunities on an equal basis.

In addition to these efforts by DCPD, ongoing conversations with Commissioner Alma Anaya and members of the Racial Equity Working Groups have indicated that there is a need for the County to have a working group to discuss issues of accessibility and equity for Cook County's residents.

Below is a current structure for the Disability Advisory Working Group with representation from the Racial Equity Leadership Council, Cook County Bureaus that are decision makers on issues of accessibility, and external partners who may be advocates for the disabled community.

Recommendations from the Council are used to help guide DCPD in developing and implementing further future accessibility accommodations as our facilities, as well as in developing or evaluating proposed operational policy changes for the various user agencies.

Working Group Members

Chair- Selected by Racial Equity Leadership Council or a member of the Racial Equity Leadership Council

Member – Commissioner Alma Anaya

Member – Commissioner Stanley Moore (Chair of County's Asset Management Committee)

Member – Commissioner Scott Britton

Member – One representative from Bureau of Human Resources

Member – One Representative from the Racial Equity Working Group

Ex Officio – President's Office and Bureau of Asset Management

Member – Representatives from an Advocacy Organization and/or an external partner working on accessibility issues

Member – Representatives from Bureau of Asset Management

Governance Structure

It is recommended that this Working Group continue to be part of the numerous working groups created through the Racial Equity Leadership Council. Because of the ebb and flow of pandemic and vaccination delivery responses, impacting members' availability, the frequency of meetings for this working group was intermittent in 2021. Pending the hiring of an ADA director and specific project needs, we will convene this group as needed moving forward but at least once per quarter starting in November 2021.

Current or Future Discussion Items for this Working Group:

- ADA Improvements to Public Facing Facilities
- Pedway ADA Access
- Equity and Accessibility in Communications
 - Use of ASL interpreters, accessible wayfinding and signage
 - Digital Accessibility

This group will be our main disability community engagement and planning resource.

Summary

Cook County has undertaken a structured series of actions to expand access to its facilities, not only to meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act, but to pursue opportunities to provide additional support or accommodations to increase our ability to provide effective services to all County residents.