



## **Annual Report on Accessibility in County Facilities**

**October 2024**

### **OVERVIEW**

2024 marks the 34<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the landmark federal civil rights law that guarantees 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 to our residents, visitors, and to County personnel. The President and the Board of Commissioners have prioritized 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) 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 individuals with disabilities.

The County owns, leases, and operates a wide variety of facilities, which presents 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 President Preckwinkle took office, individual projects were undertaken to address the most urgent needs for accessibility. This included, 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 renovations and new building projects to increase accessibility at the Department of Corrections campus. Localized ADA renovation projects completed at the DOC total more than \$11 million to date. 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 that could not be structurally 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 fully accessible.

The year 2024 has seen significant progress in the next phases of this undertaking. Assessments are underway or preparing to commence at substantial portions of the Public Safety portfolio as an ADA improvement program gets underway for the DOC campus and courthouses.

## **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 where possible, 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 (Public Safety, Corporate, and Public 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.

- The 2015 US Department of Justice (DOJ) Barriers Report indicated specific ADA challenges on the Department of Corrections (DOC) Campus. Since the report was issued, of 214 items identified as needing action or operational changes, 199 are either completed or closed, were in buildings that have since been demolished, or did not require capital modifications. All of the remaining 15 items are included in an RFQ for a wrap-around assessment of the entire DOC Campus that was advertised earlier in 2024 and is currently in evaluation.
- 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 was executed by Department of Facilities Management (DFM), DCPP, in collaboration with the Office of the Chief Judge and other justice stakeholders, developed a new courtroom at the Skokie Courthouse, providing full accessibility not only for the judge but also for all courtroom participants. Design was completed in FY2021, construction of the first phase of the project is complete, and the new courtroom is anticipated to be completed in 2025. It is expected to serve as a template for similar upgrades at other courthouses.

### **2. Develop comprehensive accessibility assessments to determine project needs**

DCPP requested multiple large-scale ADA assessment projects in the Public Safety portfolio to be approved by the Board as part of the FY2024 and subsequent years' CIP:

- In FY2022 the County commissioned an assessment of the approximately 150 courtrooms in the Daley Center. Working with the Office of the Chief Judge (OCJ) and the Illinois Attorney General's office, the subset of courtrooms to be renovated for full accessibility has been identified, design work completed, and construction of the ADA renovations underway.
- The final deliverable for the **Cermak Health Facility** assessment will be submitted in Q4. Following its completion, an RFP would be issued for A/E services for contract documents and construction administration of the corrective actions.
- The Board awarded contracts for ADA assessments and preliminary designs for the renovations at seven of the **outlying courthouses**. Each of these assessments has commenced and are anticipated to be completed in FY2025 with RFP's to follow for construction documents.
- DCPD also issued an RFQ and is currently evaluating responses with OCPO in order to be able to recommend award of a contract with a design professional to complete an accessibility assessment of the Juvenile Temporary Detention Center.
- To capture needs not included in the previously completed DOJ Barriers report or the various localized upgrades already completed at the Jail campus, DCPD is issued an RFQ and is currently evaluating responses with OCPO in order to be able to recommend award of contracts with design professionals to provide a wrap-around ADA assessment of all buildings (approximately 60 structures) at the **DOC Campus**.

### 3. Incorporate accessibility improvements within standard renovation projects

All three capital portfolios contain projects that redevelop or renovate existing spaces across the County. DCPD makes it a priority to address accessibility deficiencies or concerns in such renovation projects, to bring those areas up to current ADA standards and, where feasible, pursue universal design to provide accommodations beyond the minimum requirements.

- 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).
- To ensure consistency across all projects in implementation of the County's accessibility policies and goals, the recently awarded Construction Management teams for the public safety and corporate portfolios include provision of an ADA/accessibility manager, to supplement the existing

expertise of DCPD staff until a new ADA Project Director is on board (see below).



*Figure 1- County Building Clerk Renovations*

#### **4. Develop large-scale capital program initiatives**

The ADA/accessibility assessment and design contracts, taken together, cover the entire DOC campus and all of our courthouses. Once construction is complete, they will result in upgrades in access by the public and staff across the entire portfolio, including:

- 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.
- In tandem with the assessments of the existing courtrooms, in FY2022 the County began working with the full range of stakeholders (the Court, Sheriff, States Attorney, Public Defender, Clerk, Bureau of Technology (BOT), DFM, etc.) to develop, issue, and award a contract for professional services to develop and specify systems to upgrade the AV and IT systems for the County's approximately 330 courtrooms. The development by the team of the RFQ for these services is underway and is expected to be out to the market in Q4 2023. Accessibility is a critical component and a primary driver of that initiative. Building upon what has been developed for the new fully accessible Skokie courtroom, and in consultation with the Administrative Office of the United States Courts (which has similar challenges) and the National Center for State Courts, the goal is to develop a new national standard in courtroom technology, and to implement those

upgrades in a phased, multi-year capital program across the dozen courthouses in the Cook County system.

- In support of the REASRP, the Department is overseeing a comprehensive planned multi-phase and multi-year full renovation re-stack of the County Building with a focus on accessibility, addressing every floor in the building. The Department has developed accessibility Owners Project Requirements (OPRs) for designers to consistently implement, surpassing current ADA requirements and incorporating select Universal Design Accessibility Guidelines for enhanced accessibility.

**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.

DCPP has undertaken multiple efforts to hire a new ADA Project Director, to provide subject matter expertise both on projects focused on accessibility and to serve as a resource for all our Project Directors on projects that have an accessibility component. This position will also be responsible for the development of a County-wide facilities accessibility policy.

In the meantime, the Department executed contracts in 2022 with three new Construction Management teams, one for each of the portfolios. For the Public Safety and Corporate Facilities portfolios, the teams each include an ADA/Accessibility consultant to support the Department's Project Directors on accessibility issues as the Department works on filling the ADA Compliance Project Director role. For projects in the Health and Hospitals portfolio, the Department works directly with Cook County Health and their consultants and designers, since accessibility is such a fundamental component of healthcare environments.

In addition, the Department and the Office of the Chief Procurement Officer (OCPO) have issued a solicitation for a Program Management Office (PMO). The proposed PMO team includes technical resources and ADA expertise to support the Department in developing program-wide policies and initiatives to go beyond the legal minimums for accessibility to move the County's assets toward Universal Design solutions until the ADA Compliance Project Director is on board. The PMO contract is expected to be brought to the Board at its October 2024 meeting.

## **PROJECTS**

## **Public Safety Portfolio**

In the FY2024 CIP, there are 34 projects in the Public Safety Portfolio that are either ADA-specific or ADA-involved, totaling a 2024 budget amount of \$13,457,480 and a projected total value of over \$100,000,000.

The Board awarded contracts that permitted ADA assessments to commence at eight facilities including seven courthouses in FY2024. The County continued the process of procuring professional services to perform “wrap-around” accessibility assessments for the approximately 60 individual structures at the DOC campus and the Juvenile Temporary Detention Facility. The RFQ’s for the DOC campus and JTDC are in the evaluation committee phase with award anticipated in January 2025.

These assessments will give the County a comprehensive view of compliance needs for approximately 8 million square feet of space, more than half of the County’s entire inventory. The assessments will go beyond looking at the minimum needed to comply with accessibility requirements and will include identifying additional modifications that can be made to provide a higher level of accessibility and respond to the needs of the facility and its users.

As the initial assessments for the Courthouses conclude and transfer packages are developed, RFP’s will be developed for contract document and construction administration services for the corrective actions. The DOC campus and JTDC awards will include these services in addition to the assessment and Program Analysis Report.

FY24 has also included the projects to respond to accessibility related items that require being addressed earlier than the full facility including some accommodations.

In addition to projects with specific accessibility aspects to them, numerous other projects such as elevator assessments and modernizations, toilet room renovations, various interior renovations and build-outs as well as exterior parking projects, each inherently have accessibility components which will increase the level of access provided at County facilities. In particular, the hardening projects at the Courthouses will have a direct impact on the level of accessibility for the public entrances.

The Construction Management team for the portfolio continues to include a subconsultant firm with subject matter expertise to assist with the implementation of the County’s accessibility goals in the portfolio.

The following is a list of FY2024 CIP Projects, current year budgets and status, incorporating ADA design approaches:

- Eight (8) Projects in Planning or Evaluation \$1,597,000
- Two (2) Projects in Design Procurement \$550,000
- Twenty (20) Projects in Design \$4,366,480
- One (1) Projects in Construction Procurement \$500,000
- Two (2) Projects in Construction \$6,354,000
- One (1) Project at Final Completion \$90,000

### **Corporate Facilities Portfolio**

In the FY2024 CIP, there are 40 projects in the Corporate portfolio that are either ADA-specific or ADA-involved, totaling a projected value of \$35,802,228.

There are multiple full- or partial-floor renovations of the County Building as part of the multi-phase re-stacking projects starting on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor (President/Commissioner suites and Board Room), with next project on the 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> floors (Clerk), and following project on 10<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> floors (BOF). Similarly, there are multiple full- or partial-floor renovations of the Dunne Building to consolidate County functions, freeing floor space becoming 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 space.

There are also multiple upgrades to various miscellaneous End User spaces outside the re-stack projects in the County and Dunne buildings that are in progress or completed that result in full accessibility for each renovated space.

In a parallel project, the County Building elevators are currently undergoing full ADA compliant lighting upgrades to all cabs, aligning with the accessibility improvements made during the elevator modernization completed in FY2023.

At the Rockwell Warehouse, there are multiple upgrades to various miscellaneous End User spaces that are in progress that result in full accessibility for each renovated space.

There are new buildings currently being planned for DOTH and at Oak Forest Campus that will greatly improve existing operational conditions and will result in full accessibility for each renovated space.



The Construction Management team for the portfolio maintains participation from a specialized subconsultant firm to support the communication, assessment, and integration of the County's accessibility objectives within the portfolio.

The following is a list of FY2024 CIP Projects, current year budgets and status, incorporating ADA design approaches:

- Thirteen (13) Projects in Planning or Evaluation - \$1.685M
- Fourteen (14) Projects in Procurement - \$5.560M
- Five (5) Projects in Design - \$9.935M
- Eight (8) Projects in Construction or Complete - \$18.622M

### **Health and Hospitals Portfolio**

In the FY2024 CIP, there are 21 projects in the Health and Hospital portfolio that include improvements to accommodations or are specifically focused on improving accessibility to County facilities. The projects' budgets for fiscal year 2024 total \$15.6M. The majority of these projects will be carried over into or completed in FY2025.

The Health and Hospitals portfolio includes a mix of ambulatory, acute care, and administrative space. While accessibility is extremely important in all facilities; there is an increased focus on accessibility in the clinical occupancies as many of the patients using these facilities are healing and are more likely to acquire accommodations to effectively move through the facility. The Facilities Guidelines have additional accessibility requirements beyond ADAAG that ensure all clinical projects include accessibility from the initial discussions. These requirements include larger door frames, installation of handrails, contrasting/slip-resistant flooring, and others.

Current projects the team is managing that enhance or improve accessibility including multiple elevator modernizations at both John H. Stroger and Provident Hospital, entrance upgrades at the Professional Building and John H. Stroger Hospital, parking garage improvements at both Provident and John H. Stroger, lighting upgrades for improved visibility at John H. Stroger, and others. The list below includes a summary of the current and planned accessibility projects by phase:

- Four (4) Projects in Planning - \$0.23MM
- Five (5) Projects in Design - \$6.4MM
- Nine (9) Projects in Procurement - \$4.3MM
- Three (3) Projects in Construction - \$4.65MM

### **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, prior conversations with Commissioner Alma Anaya and members of the Racial Equity Working Groups 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 structure that had been outlined 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.

On major accessibility renovations such as multi-floor renovations in the County Building and the assessments and design contracts for the Public Safety portfolio, the advisory working group will be convened to receive updates to the group as well as to provide feedback to the various design teams.

## **Working Group Members**

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

Member – Commissioner Donna Miller (Chair of County's Asset Management Committee)

Member – Commissioner Alma Anaya

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 was previously 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, and the changes in members’ availability, the frequency of meetings for this working group was intermittent in 2021. The Department will include the ADA subject matter experts from the Construction Management team and Program Management team to supplement the Working Group resources in future meetings and evaluations. Due to shifts in the assignment of the members, the Working Group did not have a regular meeting schedule in 2024.

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/Technology

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, and to increase our ability to provide effective access to services for all County residents.