



CITY OF ANN ARBOR DISABILITY COMMISSION

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November 13, 2013

To the Board members of the Ann Arbor District Library and to whom it may concern of the Downtown Development Authority,

The Ann Arbor Commission on Disability Issues is contacting you concerning the front of the District Library downtown. We have had concerns from citizens about this area and their safety. The Commission was told there are many trip hazards. One quote from someone who is visually impaired says "...it (the front of the library) is very scary and dangerous." We would like to address these issues with you in a meeting.

On Friday, September 27th, four of us explored the front and sides of the Library and found that there are several issues that need attention. Some changes may help enhance the library's exterior. We feel all changes are a priority but some more urgent than others. Our findings are as follows:

Hand rails should be present along both sides of the ramp to the right of the front doors. Without them it can be potentially dangerous. Particularly for those who need the ramps with a rail for assistance and protection from falling. We suggest installing the rails from where the ramp starts on the outside edge at the top all the way to the lower end. However on the brick side of the ramp, the hand rail could be installed from the lower end up to the top and around the corner as you turn to face the front doors. This would allow those who need a hand rail to maneuver all the way up to the front doors and down the ramp much more easily and safely.

To the left side of the library doors there are stairs providing entrance to the porch area from Library Lane. We recommend that a hand rail be installed on both sides of the steps, not just one. This would help someone exiting the area to stay on the right side of the path and not have to switch books back and forth in their arms to grasp the rail.

We understand the purpose of the mats on the concrete by the front doors and the stairs at the end of the porch area are used to prevent slippage during inclement weather. They are useful; however, the yellow borders around the edges make it confusing for people who have visual disabilities, those who are not completely blind. It is generally understood that a yellow stripe indicates the edge of a step, some of the yellow stripes around the mats throw these people off by the indicator of another step which is not there. One person who is visually impaired says they do not see 3-dimensionally; therefore, everything looks flat to them. The edges of the mats would be less confusing if they were striped in a different color.

The handicap signage above the corner AADL sign on the south end of the building, as well as other signage throughout the library's exterior, should have Braille and raised symbols and/or



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wording. Having Braille on all signage helps to include people with visual disabilities and does help indicate where they are and where they need to go. Also, all signage, particularly handicap signage, should be posted at the height of 48 inches or lower. There are people, including children, who cannot reach your existing level of signage if they were to read Braille inserts. Lowering the signs would help to include more people in the library community.

The double step curb where the cars pull out of traffic in front of the library on Fifth Avenue needs some kind of an alert that there is a step other than just the curb. A tactile strip on the edge of the step on the sidewalk level would indicate a drop-off, and a yellow stripe could be done. The danger of missing a step and falling next to the street is scary. We recommend that the striping be installed the length of the pull off for cars. The Chair of our Commission, Linda Evans, has talked to Brad in the sidewalk department, they discussed these ideas and Brad can fill you in on cost for each.

One of the Commissioners who is blind indicated that the water down spouts along the brick wall side facing South Fifth Avenue are potentially hazardous to people walking or wheeling up the ramp. People with a visual disability or blind are unaware they stick out from the building. The installation of a hand rail along this area could potentially help to prevent any hazards. This Commissioner also noticed that one in particular was loose.

We noticed that the sidewalks are uneven in several places in front of the library as well as the south side of the building. Some of the break outs in the concrete are significant in places making it difficult for white cane and wheelchair users. It is possible for anyone to trip and fall in these areas.

All steps leading to the entrance are currently edged in yellow. This has faded and not as easy to detect any more. They need to be repainted very soon.

Finally, the following recommendations are suggestions that would enhance the front exterior and help to welcome all persons of the Ann Arbor community to the District Library. We suggest the use of large decorative containers of flowers. Not just any flowers. Seeing that your facility houses the Washtenaw Library for the Blind and Physically Disabled, why not use "sensory" flowers? These are plants with texture, wonderful smells and bright colors. You can experience these types of plants in Liberty Plaza where the Disability Commission has installed a Sensory Garden near the SPARK business's windows. A thought to add these planters to the library front is to place them in between the columns along the patio area. And by installing the railing along the ramp on the south end, the top of the ramp where it meets the steps facing 5th Ave will form a corner..... place one there on the lower level. Later, when a re-design is done, use these containers in the plans. Also the use of railing that is dark in color, not silver, looks more appealing.



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The Ann Arbor Commission on Disability Issues would like to thank you for taking the time to consider the changes. We would like to be involved in assisting you on the needs of people with disabilities whenever possible. Following ADA law is necessary and we are not the experts but have found going above and beyond ADA compliance makes it easier for people to maneuver. Having the front of the library so that it is safe to use ultimately will make all library participants feel welcome and included in the vibrant Ann Arbor community. Please contact us if you would consider a meeting. We can show you pictures we took of the problem areas, or take you on a short tour of the area to point out our findings. Please call or email myself at 734-276-2767 or linnie231@hotmail.com.

Thank you again for your cooperation.

Sincerely,
Linda Evans
Chairperson
Ann Arbor Commission on Disability Issues