

City of Rochester Accessibility Audit Report

2023

CHAT

COMMUNITIES FOR HEALTHY AGING TRANSITIONS

Created by the

**Strafford Regional Planning Commission and
Greater Seacoast Community Health Network**

STRAFFORD
Regional Planning Commission

GREATER SEACOAST COMMUNITY HEALTH
**STRAFFORD COUNTY
PUBLIC HEALTH
NETWORK** + ❤️ ♿

Point32Health
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HealthCare**

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Health Plan**

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Introduction

America Walks defines a walk audit as “an assessment of the pedestrian safety, accessibility, and comfort of a particular area.” Walk audits are a helpful tool for municipalities, non-profits, and local leaders to identify opportunities for improvements in a city/town, community or neighborhood’s safety and walkability. The City of Rochester, NH decided to identify these opportunities for improvement of their sidewalks and streets, as well as public buildings, in their central business district. Because of the expanded scope to include public buildings, they identified their project as an Accessibility Audit. This report outlines the approach to developing the audit, presents the findings and includes short-, medium-, and long-term recommendations for addressing the issues identified during the audit. This report also includes recommendations for future Accessibility Audits in Rochester and ways that other communities can modify this for their own sidewalks, streets, and buildings.

Designing the Audit & Approach

In the summer of 2023, the City of Rochester completed an Age-Friendly Action Plan as part of Communities for Healthy Aging Transitions (CHAT) project led by the Strafford Regional Planning Commission (SRPC) and Strafford County Public Health Network (SCPHN). One of the actions in the Plan was to investigate the accessibility of public buildings in Rochester. In discussions with the Rochester Planning Department, the team learned that the City’s Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program planned to use funding to improve access to public buildings, specifically City Hall and the Annex. The Team saw this as an opportunity to expand that plan to include the pathways that lead people to public buildings: sidewalks and crosswalks. To do this, SRPC and SCPHN engaged with multiple departments from the City of Rochester and local organizations (see Partners on the right) to identify an approach that would best serve the Rochester

WHAT IS CHAT?

The CHAT project was funded by the Tufts Health Plan Foundation, now Point 32 Health Foundation, to examine age-friendliness in the greater-Strafford County region and was led by the Strafford Regional Planning Commission (SRPC) and Strafford County Public Health Network

Rochester Accessibility Audit Partners

Rochester Planning Department
Rochester Department of Public Works
Rochester Office of Economic Development
Rochester Main Street
Greater Rochester Chamber of Commerce
The Riverwalk Committee
Rochester Recreation Department
Rochester Community Development Division
Rochester Performance and Arts Center

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community. See Appendix A for the presentation to the partners to kick this off.

American Association for Retired Persons, better known as AARP, created a [Walk Audit Tool Kit](#)¹ that was referenced during the design of the Accessibility Audit for Rochester, which was focused on the central business district of the City. The AARP Tool Kit provides guidance for designing a community-based walk audit including identifying locations, building community buy-in, engagement, development of materials, planning, implementation, and follow-up considerations. The development of Rochester’s Accessibility Audit took place over several months with various meetings and discussions with the Partners listed on page 1, and culminated in a coordinated event that took place on September 24, 2023. Using AARP’s Walk Audit Tool Kit and other resources (see Appendix B, H, and I), a customized Audit questionnaire was developed that included one set of questions for public sidewalks and street crossings, and one that assessed public building access.

Individuals from the Audit Partners, along with additional volunteers with various physical abilities living in and/or serving the Rochester community, completed the Audit at the September 24th event that was held at the Rochester Performance and Arts Center, or on their own time within a 5-day period of the event using the Audit tool developed. We’d like to thank those who were able to join our event or complete the Accessibility Audit independently for their contribution to improving the safety, walkability, and accessibility of Rochester’s central business district.

The volunteers that completed the Audit for public sidewalks and crossings were asked to observe and “inventory” sidewalk problems, street crossing problems, issues with safety and appeal, and barriers to public transit access. Those completing the public building’s audit were asked to observe and inventory issues with the accessibility of entryways, restrooms, wayfinding, and navigation. You can find the full lists of questions for the street/sidewalk audit in Appendix C. During the development of our Audit tools, the work group discussed the potential of including positive aspects of the area that supported accessibility

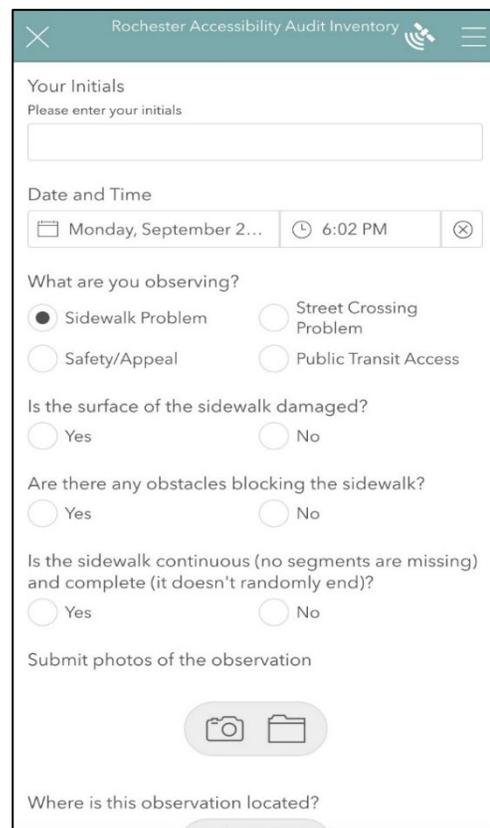
The image is a screenshot of a mobile survey application titled "Rochester Accessibility Audit Inventory". The form contains several sections: "Your Initials" with a text input field; "Date and Time" with a date and time picker showing "Monday, September 2..." and "6:02 PM"; "What are you observing?" with four radio button options: "Sidewalk Problem" (selected), "Street Crossing Problem", "Safety/Appeal", and "Public Transit Access"; "Is the surface of the sidewalk damaged?" with "Yes" and "No" radio buttons; "Are there any obstacles blocking the sidewalk?" with "Yes" and "No" radio buttons; "Is the sidewalk continuous (no segments are missing) and complete (it doesn't randomly end)?" with "Yes" and "No" radio buttons; "Submit photos of the observation" with camera and gallery icons; and "Where is this observation located?" with a location input field.

Figure 1: Screenshot of the Rochester Accessibility Audit Questions in Survey123

¹ <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/getting-around/aarp-walk-audit-tool-kit.html>

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in our inventory. Ultimately, the group decided to only include aspects that needed improvement as they felt that those were the key elements to highlight in order to generate action towards improved accessibility. Once questions were developed in collaboration between SRPC, SCPHN, and partners, SRPC developed final Audit tools in the *ArcGIS Survey123* application. Volunteers completing the Audit were instructed on downloading and using app during the pre-Audit briefing and used *Survey123* on their phones to answer questions related to each observed problem. Volunteers used their phone's camera to add images to the inventory and provide additional context to the concerns.

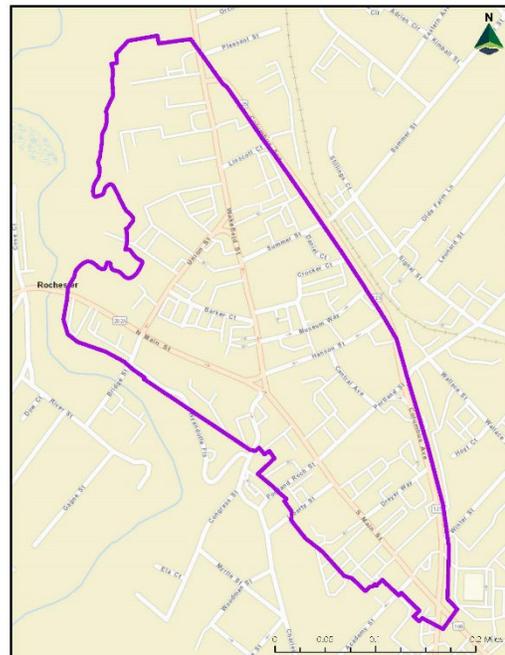
Inventories from all participants were uploaded to SRPC's online mapping platform and analyzed by SRPC staff for inclusion in this final report. Below, you will find more information on the area of the Rochester Accessibility Audit, a summary of the findings from the Audit, and recommendations being made that would improve the accessibility of Rochester's central business district and those public buildings that were audited. This report, the recommendations included, and more detailed data from the Audit will be presented to the City of Rochester's Planning, Economic Development and Public Works Departments and others in the city's leadership. They and others will use the findings to inform on upcoming improvement projects to include elements that will improve accessibility. It is also recommended that this Audit and related tools be replicated to inform on additional improvements to make other neighborhoods in the City of Rochester community more accessible for all.

Anatomy of the Accessibility

Audit

Study Area

The study area for the Accessibility Audit encompassed the entire central business district which also includes one of Rochester's historic districts (see Map 1). The uses in Downtown Rochester include dense retail and mixed-use buildings directly abutting the sidewalk, municipal buildings, and apartments. As you get outside the downtown core, the uses are set off of the street more and include a mix of single story and multi-story buildings with a variety of businesses: restaurants, financial institutions, professional services, faith-based organizations, and residential (single and multi-family dwellings). The entire district was about 57 acres and 22,000 linear feet of sidewalk.



Map 1: Rochester Accessible Audit Study Area

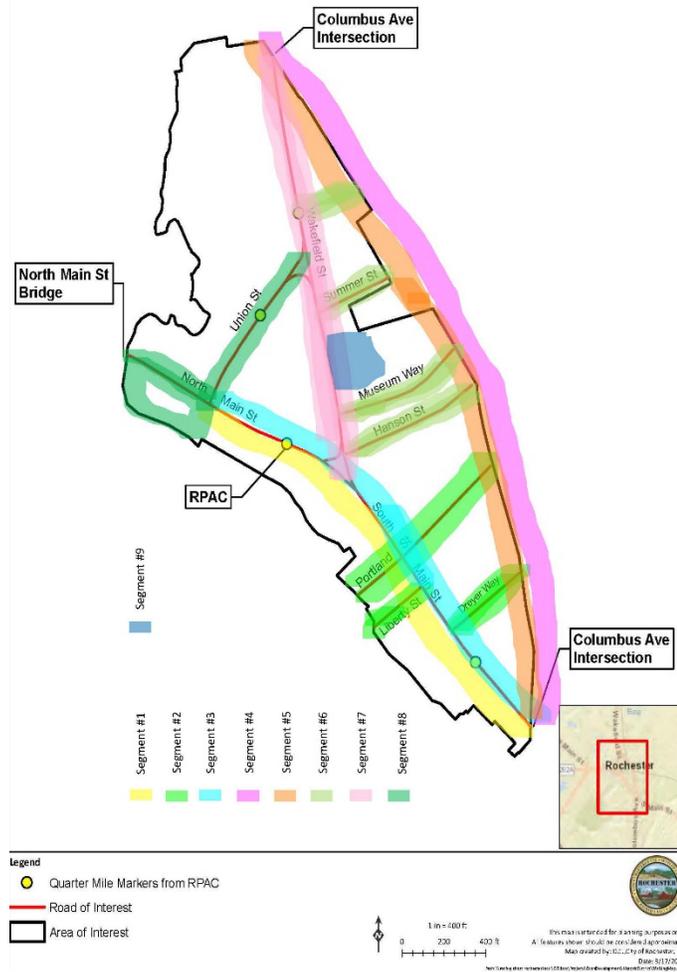
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To create manageable areas for people to audit, we divided the study area into segments. To determine the segments, the planning team members conducted a field trip to assess realistic, manageable segments. After walking the entire study area, the team divided the study area up into 9 segments (see Map 2). Eight of the segments were audits to assess sidewalks, crosswalks, signals, and navigability for people of all abilities who are walking; pushing a stroller; or using a walker, wheelchair, cane, or other device to assist with mobility needs. Each segment measured between 4-6 blocks and was intended to be audited within 1 and 1 ½ hours. The ninth segment was an audit of two public buildings, City Hall and the Annex. Auditors assessed the accessibility of the doorways, signage, restrooms, and other public spaces leading into and inside the building.

The Audit

The questions for the audit were designed to identify deficiencies one by one along a designated route. This differs from other audits which ask auditors to “rank” or “score” the area. This survey, using Survey123, attached a physical location to each issue that was identified, allowed the auditor to take a photo, and then it was uploaded to SRPC’s online mapping platform. SRPC and City staff tested the audit in the field to ensure everyone was comfortable using it, and explaining how to use it, and that we were identifying important challenges in the field.

On the day of the Audit, SRPC held two sessions, one from 3pm-5pm and one from 5pm-7pm. SRPC provided food, beverages, and a thorough overview of how to conduct the audit. The team informed Public Safety officials to ensure that they knew volunteers were navigating the streets. We were especially mindful of alerting Public Safety because 5 of the segments were audited by people using a wheelchair.



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When the SRPC team reflected on the Audit, we had several recommendations for things that went well or that can be improved for future Audits:

1. Assigning segments with at least 2 people was helpful for many reasons. Safety is key, but it was also helpful to have another person to witness the issue that was identified.
2. SRPC sent the training and segment information in advance, which everyone was thankful for. Volunteers said it helped streamline the audit for them on the day of.
3. A comprehensive training to start the Audit, with visuals, was key.
4. SRPC had everyone sign a waiver. No incidents were reported, but this protected us from liability since we were sending members of the public to conduct fieldwork.
5. Identifying deficiencies or issues in the field, as opposed to a condition assessment, went a lot smoother and faster. It was easier to train volunteers to identify problems than it would have been to train them to assess conditions consistently.
6. Outreach to various partners was very successful. Large postcards (see Appendix D), attendance at a Senior Center breakfast, talking with Chamber, engaging the Main Street Association to hand out postcards, and social media posts on all of the Rochester Community Facebook pages got the word out widely.
7. The Building Audit needs to be reworked and a different tool or process for auditing needs to be created. Survey123 is great for single points that could be "geocoded" to a specific place in Rochester. We did not need that for a building audit, so perhaps just a paper survey would suffice for buildings.
8. In addition to needing a different format, the Building Audit should not be conducted with a tape measure alone. Someone with lived experience should be involved. A minimally ADA compliant building is still not truly accessible for most wheelchair users.
9. The Segment Map should be an aerial as a base layer and have directionals for which way to walk to conduct the audit.
10. A "floater" audit organizer should be designated to take photos and be available for volunteer questions or emergencies.
11. Make sure there is a recap with all of the volunteers when they are done. It really helps to hear their feedback while it's fresh.

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Project Findings

This project included two types of surveys for accessibility: one that deals with road crossings and sidewalks, and the other assessed public buildings. The findings for each of these surveys are presented below. A map with all of the locations that contain accessibility challenges can be found in Appendix E.

Findings – Road/Sidewalk Accessibility

Once the audits were complete, we assessed 471 data points that were collected for the road-based inventories and 11 for the public buildings.² The data points are issues, problems or assets that have been recorded through the Survey123 tool by the inventory participants. The data points for both types of inventories are presented by category in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1: Road/Sidewalk Accessibility Inventory

Category	Data Points Collected (#)
Sidewalks	361
Street Crossings	88
Safety and Appeal	19
Public Transit	3

As you can see from Table 1, there were more data points collected for sidewalks and street crossings. There were a number of issues with both sidewalks and street crossings that the inventory participants could identify, so those responses are listed below. Of the 361 data points collected for sidewalks, 336 were collected because of defects found (i.e., large cracks, missing material, etc.) and 34 points were because of an obstacle on the sidewalk (vegetation, objects, etc.).

The sidewalk issues (Table 2) that were identified in the field consisted of three categories: raised or sunken sections (47.6%), large cracks (50%), and missing material (46%). In some cases, all three of these issues were identified at a single point (there was a sunken section, large crack, and missing material) so the inventory participants were asked to log a point for each issue that was found. The participants were given a guide to help them identify these issues in the field. Please see Appendix F for a definition of each of these categories in the Sidewalk Guide.

² Please note: for the public buildings, the survey was limited to City Hall and the Annex, so the limited number of data points should not be compared apples and apples to the large number of points collected for the road-based inventories.

Rochester Accessibility Audit Report

Table 2: Sidewalk Data Point Report

Category	Data Points Collected (#)	%
Total Sidewalks with Defects	336	
Raised or Sunken Sections	172	48%
Large Cracks	179	50%
Missing Material	167	46%
Dangerous Curb Cut	22	6%
Total Sidewalks with Obstacles	34	
Overgrown Vegetation	17	5%
Movable Objects	4	1%
Fixed Light	3	0.8%
Drain	2	0.6%
Fixed Sign	1	0.3%
Utility Pole	1	0.3%
Hydrant	0	0
Mailbox	0	0
Water	0	0

Table 3 outlines the various issues related to the street crossings identified in the study area. There were seven issues related to street crossings: ground surface indicators missing, sound operated cross signals missing or malfunctioning, crossing signage missing or in need of replacement, push to talk signals missing, traffic light or stop sign issues, ramps from sidewalk to street missing or defective, and lack of crosswalk markings. The biggest issue that was reported in the field was lack of ground surface indicators (see Figure 1), with 65% of the crosswalks either lacking an indicator pad or needing replacement due to wear and tear. Sound operated cross signals were also identified as issues in the field with 59% of the participants completing a report that they were either missing, out of date, or not functioning properly. See Table 3 for additional sidewalk datapoints.



Figure 1: Ground Surface Indicators are the bumpy surfaces used on ramps to transition from the sidewalk to the crosswalk.

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Table 3: Street Crossing Data Point Report

Category	Data Points Collected (#)	%
Total Street Crossing Problems	88	
Ground Surface Indicator	57	65%
Sound Operated Cross Signals	52	59%
Crossing Signage	43	49%
Push to Talk Signals	39	44%
Traffic Light or Stop Sign	28	32%
Ramps from Sidewalk to Street	27	31%
Crosswalk Markings	18	21%

Of note, 60% of the street crossing challenges noted in the field were found on 5 streets: Portland Street, Columbus Avenue, South Main Street, North Main Street, and Wakefield Street. As discussed in the Recommendations section, there may be opportunities to address these challenges during construction of existing or future infrastructure projects, which will save the City time and money.

Findings – Public Building Accessibility

Three volunteers were assigned to conduct an inventory of City Hall and the City Hall Annex which is located directly adjacent to City Hall. The inventory for the public buildings was focused more on entrances (was there a ramp, did the door stick, was there an automated door button, could the wheelchair get inside and navigate the foyer), office accessibility, availability and accessibility into and inside public restrooms, and lighting and wayfinding around the building (especially availability in braille). There were 10 data points collected around City Hall, the Annex, and the Welfare Office in the basement of City Hall. Table 4 highlights the observations by the facility and various locations around/within those facilities (i.e., on the street, wayfinding, restrooms, etc.). Figure 3 is associated with the observations in Table 4. Definitions are available Appendix G, which includes the Public Facilities Guide.



Figure 2: Crumbling sidewalk and street crossing on Summer Street

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Figure 3: Map of Public Building Audit Locations

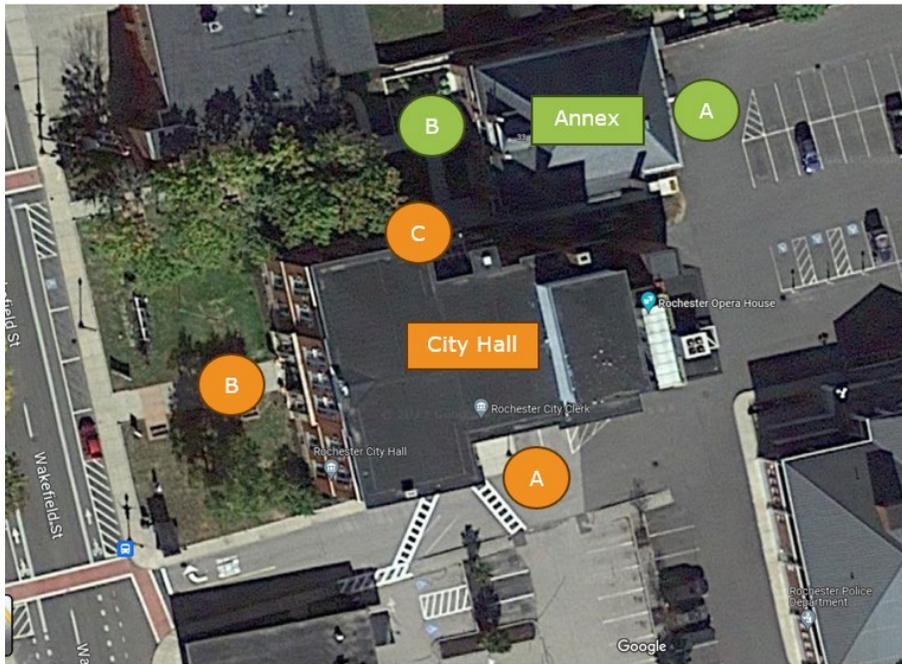


Table 4: Public Buildings Accessibility Audit Observations

Facility/Location	Observations
City Hall	
On the Street	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs more/better signage outside. Entrances A and B are clearly marked as entrances, but the only signs to get to the accessible entrance C are very small signs with arrows. "Handicap Entrance" should say "Accessible Entrance" • There are a total of 6 accessible parking spaces, and they are not near entrance C. • Entrance C is the only accessible entrance. It is very close to the Annex's entrance B, and the Annex's automatic door button is placed such that it is unclear which door it goes to. The sign for entrance C is also difficult to find.
Wayfinding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indoor wayfinding is minimal. Little to no braille anywhere. Signs are up high with no symbols for those who may not be able to read or are non-English speakers. • Most of the signs are up over doors. No braille options and very few signs on/next to doors • Elevator signs upstairs (level 1, outside of the City Clerk office) are missing. • No arrows on any signs. • Lighting is sufficient to read signs barring blindness or reading difficulties.

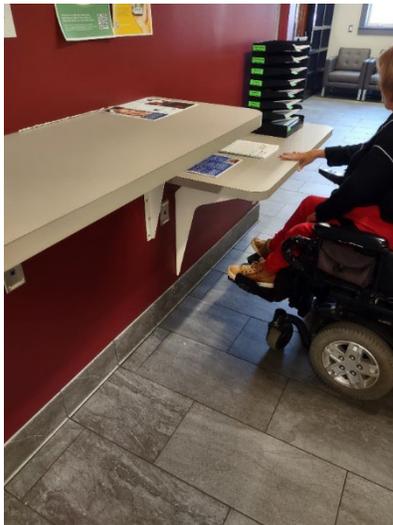
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Facility/Location	Observations
Elevator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once inside entrance C, there is a tiny room into an elevator. Not enough space for two wheelchairs to pass each other exiting and entering the elevator. • There is no Braille for the elevator in City Hall. • The elevator is narrow, and buttons are difficult to reach. • The sign is confusing, as the basement is at the top of the list and the third floor at the bottom. • Not all the available buttons on the elevator panel are listed. One time the elevator door opened to show a padlocked door.
Restrooms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signs outside lacked the people shapes and Braille. • The men’s bathroom door had a round knob which are not accessible. If push/pull doors are not an option, the knob should be flat (so it can be pushed up and down) and large enough to loop an arm around. • The accessible stall is too small for motorized wheelchairs. <p><i>Notes on the Women’s Room:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The door was an inch too narrow, wide chairs will not fit. • The door was quite heavy. It can be pushed open, but you could not open it alone in a wheelchair. • Wall mounted soap is too far away to dispense. Wheelchair users would not be able to reach at all. • The “accessible” stall was not accessible. A manual chair might have fit, but an electric chair could not. Could not clear the door or turn around. You would have to back the chair into the stall to close the door and use the stall.
City Clerk’s Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The combined locations of a column and a movable sandwich board sign made for a very narrow path into the office. Better positioning of the sign would resolve. • The counters are too high, and as a result, the “ring for service” bell is too high as well. • If someone in a wheelchair needed to fill something out, the staff clarified that they have clipboards, or they could bring them to another area with a table.

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Facility/Location	Observations
Welfare Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outside of the elevator in the basement, we found a narrow hall with the original foundation visible. One rock sticks out ~6 inches. There is no room to turn a wheelchair around in the elevator, so some users may need to back up to get past this. See Photo. • The hallway to the Welfare Office lacks wayfinding. • The hallway has a small ramp that is unmarked with no railings or visible indications of a ramp. A manual wheelchair user may find themselves going too fast. An indication that there is an incline would be helpful. • At the bottom of the ramp, the hallway splits. There are no signs indicating what offices are in each direction. 
Annex	
On the Street	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs more/better signage outside. The signs should say "Accessible Entrance". • There are a total of 6 accessible parking spaces, and they are not near entrance B. • The Annex's entrance B is very close to City Hall's entrance C, and the Annex's automatic door button is placed such that it is unclear which door it goes to. • The automatic door button was broken.
Wayfinding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great job on the Braille! • Wayfinding here is much better than City Hall. Large service windows line the main corridor and staff are available. • The signs are all accessible (text, icon, braille) and at the right height.
Elevator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellent wayfinding • Buttons are low and clearly labeled with numbers, symbols, and braille • The door chirps when it is being held open • The elevator itself is narrow and small. Not large enough for a large, motorized wheelchair or to turn around.

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Facility/Location	Observations
Restrooms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rather than stalls, there is one large family bathroom. It is accessible: room to clear the door/turn a wheelchair around • The soap was a little high, but it was closer to the end of the sink, so it could be reached.
Offices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large service windows line the main corridor and staff from planning and development are right there to answer any questions • There are counters in the hall at standing height and at wheelchair height for filling out paperwork. The design of these counters is perfect and looks like something that would be implemented in City Hall. • The conference rooms upstairs are wonderful. There is plenty of room to navigate around the tables, and all of the furniture is on wheels/can be moved to accommodate all 
Courthouse	
On the Street	The route there is a long ramp down around the building. The railing at the bottom of the main ramp is broken.
Wayfinding	There are not a lot of signage inside, but it seems like it is open enough to get around in a wheelchair.

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Recommendations

The recommendations in this section have been broken into Short-term, Medium-Term, and Long-Term. Short-term can be completed in a season or less than one year, Medium-Term is anytime between 1 and 3 years, and Long-Term is 3+ years. In addition to recommendations being categorized by length of time, this section also identifies where there is cross-over with existing projects listed in the 2022 Capital Improvements Program (the most recent year SRPC staff could refer to). As mentioned above, time and cost savings could be realized by piggybacking accessibility improvements with these infrastructure projects that have already been budgeted by the City. And finally, a spreadsheet has been provided on a flash drive (Appendix J) with this project deliverable that can be filtered to allow DPW, Planning, Economic Development, CDBG, Recreation, or other departments to utilize when working on a specific street, building, or area of Downtown. We hope that the spreadsheet is beneficial in prioritizing and implementing accessibility projects. SRPC also provided all of the maps and photos generated as part of this project on a flash drive as the final project deliverable.

Short-Term Projects (Completed in 1-2 seasons or less than one year)

<i>Project</i>	<i>Suggested Lead(s)</i>
Cut back overgrown vegetation	DPW
Restripe crosswalks	DPW
Work with businesses/City departments who may have signs or other obstacles on the sidewalk to relocate them or find another signage option.	Economic Development/Chamber of Commerce
Install signage/wayfinding in City Hall and the Annex, especially related to restrooms and how to enter and navigate around the buildings.	Facilities
Communicate where accessible entrances/areas are in the community	Communications Director
Filter the comprehensive spreadsheet to find other short-term projects every month to determine where there is crossover with other projects in the field (i.e., sidewalk cracks or missing pavement)	DPW

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Medium Term Projects (Completed in 1-3 years)

Project	Suggested Lead(s)
Install signage for crosswalks	DPW
Remove the parking spots closest to crosswalks that are blocking sight distance for pedestrians and drivers. It will be important to discuss this with a variety of partners before implementing	DPW, Economic Development, Chamber of Commerce, Main Street Association
If possible, use some of the funds under the Concrete Flatwork project in the CIP to repair the cracks in high traffic areas of downtown, primarily North Main Street, South Main Street, Union Street and Wakefield Street.	DPW
Address the restroom accessibility issues in City Hall related to the door handles and soap dispensers.	Facilities, CDBG, City Manager's Office
Order and install signage at the appropriate height for offices and the elevators with Braille.	Facilities, CDBG, City Manager's Office
Replace the broken ground mounted surface indicators.	DPW

Long-Term Projects (Completed in 4+ years)

Project	Suggested Lead(s)
Replace all of the sound operated cross signals including the pedestrian access buttons (Main Street and Union) and by Walgreens and Portland and S Main Street	DPW
Install/reinstall sidewalks on Portland Street, Dreyer Way, and Columbus Avenue	DPW
Address Street Crossing challenges for the top 5 streets: Portland Street, Columbus Avenue, South Main Street, North Main Street, Wakefield Street	DPW

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Capital Improvements Program Connections

The following projects that were proposed in the FY 22 Capital Improvements Budget for Rochester have been identified as potential opportunities to address the challenges identified in the Accessibility Audit. The Capital Improvements Budget that SRPC used to reference these projects was the most recent version online (2022) and is linked in Appendix K.

- *Sidewalk Improvement/Replacement Program (\$1.4 M over 6 years). Continue sidewalk replacements on Portland Street from where they left off on the other side of Columbus Avenue.*
- *Connect Union Street Parking Lot Reconstruction Project in the CIP to any improvements along Union Street, including crossings and sidewalks.*
- *Combine intersection improvements (crossings and issues with technology) and sidewalk installations as part of the Columbus/Summer Intersection CIP Project.*
- *Extend sidewalks along Columbus Avenue where they currently don't exist through the Sidewalk Extension Program.*
- *Upgrade the walk signals at South Main and Columbus Avenue, Union Street/ North Main Street, and Wakefield/Summer Street as part of the Traffic Signal Upgrade Program.*
- *Fix sidewalk, site distance and street crossing issues identified along Wakefield Street as part of the Wakefield Street Reconstruction.*
- *If there are opportunities for sidewalk or street crossing upgrades as part of the Sewer and/or Water upgrades on Wakefield Street or Portland Street.*

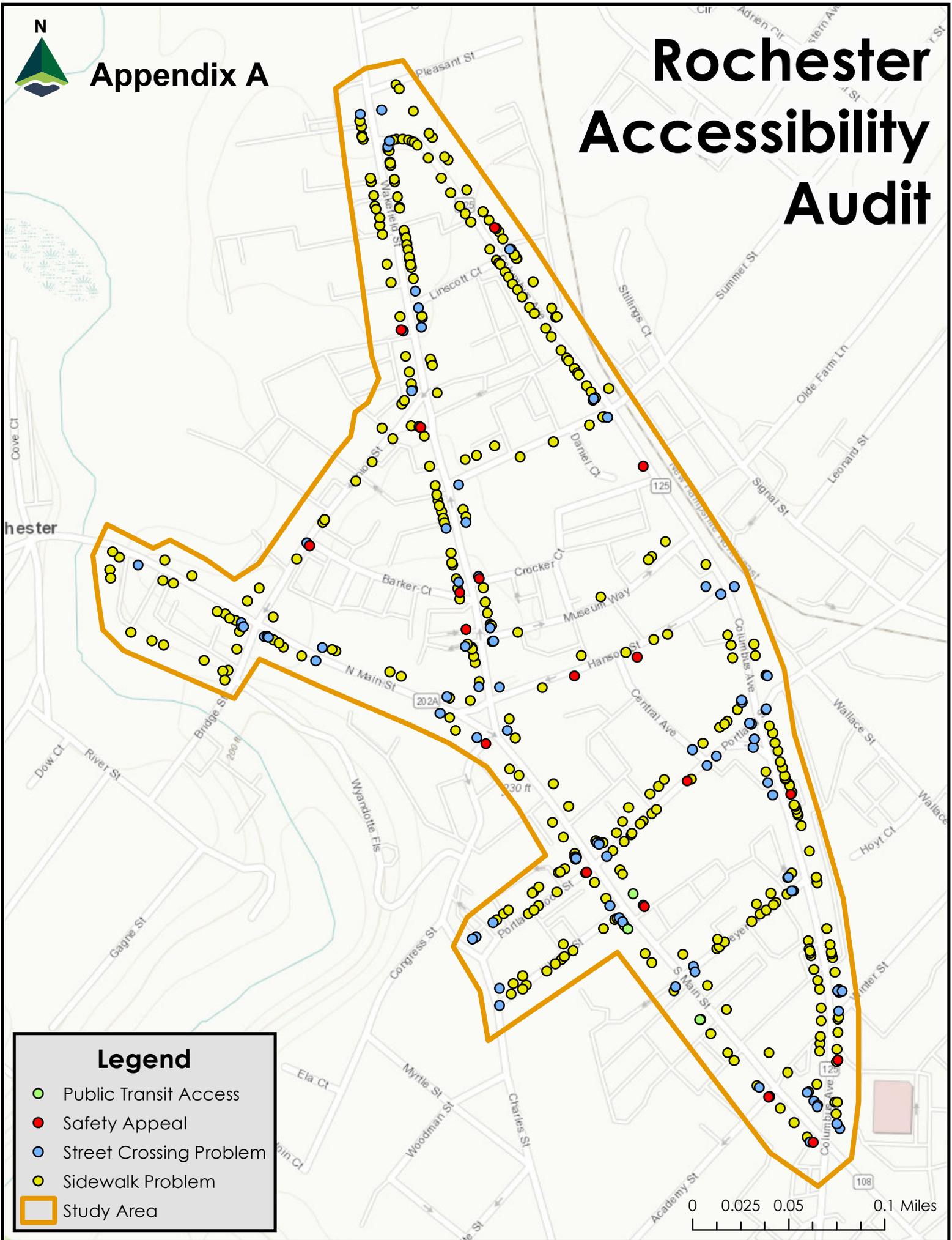
Appendix

- Appendix A: Accessibility Audit Presentation to Partners
- Appendix B: [AARP Walk Audit Tool Kit](#)
- Appendix C: Full list of Audit questions in Survey123
- Appendix D: Large Postcard (printed 5x6") used for volunteer recruitment
- Appendix E: Map of All Accessibility Challenges Recorded in the Field
- Appendix F: Sidewalk Guide
- Appendix G: Public Facilities Handout Guide
- Appendix H: [Inclusive Walk Audit from Minnesota Department of Health](#)
- Appendix I: Montana Disability and Health Program (PDF)
- Appendix J: Spreadsheet of Audit Results that is filterable for each column (on flash drive)
- Appendix K: [City of Rochester FY 22 Proposed CIP Budget](#)
- Appendix L: All Maps with data points recorded during the Audits (on flash drive)
- Appendix M: All photos taken during the Audit (on flash drive)



Appendix A

Rochester Accessibility Audit



Legend

- Public Transit Access
- Safety Appeal
- Street Crossing Problem
- Sidewalk Problem
- Study Area

0 0.025 0.05 0.1 Miles

Appendix B

CHAT

COMMUNITIES FOR HEALTHY AGING TRANSITIONS

Today's Agenda

1. Welcome and Introductions
2. Project Background
3. Overview of Accessibility Audit
4. Other Initiatives/Resources to coordinate
5. Recruiting Volunteers
6. Next Steps

Project Overview

Mission

We will engage the communities in Strafford County and nearby towns in Rockingham and Carroll Counties to foster diverse, equitable, inclusive, livable environments where people can grow and thrive, regardless of age.

Project Stakeholders

- Rochester Planning Office
- Seacoast Outright
- UNH Institute on Disability
- UNH Cooperative Extension
- Community Partners
- Strafford Community Action Partnership
- Strafford County Public Health Network
- Department of Health and Human Services
- SRPC Commission member





- Other Areas**
- Emergency Preparedness
 - Elder abuse
 - Public safety
 - Dementia-friendly

LEARN MORE
[AARP.org/Livable](https://www.aarp.org/Livable)

Age-Friendly Rochester Plan



- Community Profile
- 6 Goals, 3-5 Actions/Goal
- Implementation plan: timeframe, responsible party, partners, resources, and ideas for implementation
- Implementation Project: *Conduct Accessibility Audit of Downtown Rochester*

What is an Accessibility Audit??



What is an Accessibility Audit??

AARP

Walk Audit Tool Kit

A self-service guide for assessing a community's walkability



Worksheets available at
[AARP.org/WalkAudit](https://www.aarp.org/WalkAudit)

AARP

Walk Audit Tool Kit

A self-service guide for assessing a community's walkability



Pedestrian and Cyclist Crosswalk
Washington, D.C. Road Side, Bulb-Out, Curb Ramp and more
Cape May, New Jersey Dedicated Bike Lane
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

In too many communities, people can't safely walk to where they need or want to go due to a lack of sidewalks, crosswalks or other safety features that make streets safe for pedestrians and drivers.

A walk audit is a simple activity in which an individual or a team observes and evaluates the walkability of a location to document how and if pedestrians can safely travel along a street, navigate an intersection and get from point A to B, C and so on.

Who can conduct a walk audit? Anyone!

The **AARP Walk Audit Tool Kit** can be used by local leaders, advocates, community organizations and residents to ...

- enable people to get around without having to drive
- help reduce traffic congestion and pollution
- inspire the development of pedestrian-friendly streets
- increase exercise opportunities for people of all ages
- gather input about community infrastructure needs
- educate residents about street design elements that support safety
- encourage social interactions among neighbors
- give a boost to property values
- empower community leaders and residents to be the agents of needed change

The **AARP Walk Audit Tool Kit** is free and available for download or order.
Visit [AARP.org/WalkAudit](https://www.aarp.org/WalkAudit).

D20341

A WALK AUDIT IS ... an activity in which participants observe and evaluate the walkability of a location to identify and document if and how pedestrians can safely travel along a street, navigate an intersection and get from Point A to B and C and so on.

A WALK AUDIT CAN ...

- **Gather input about community infrastructure needs and investments**
- **Educate residents about design elements that support safety**
- **Empower community members and local leaders to become agents of change**

A WALK AUDIT CAN LEAD TO ...

- **Reduced traffic congestion and pollution**
- **Healthier, more active lifestyles**
- **Increased property values**
- **Safer streets for people of all ages**

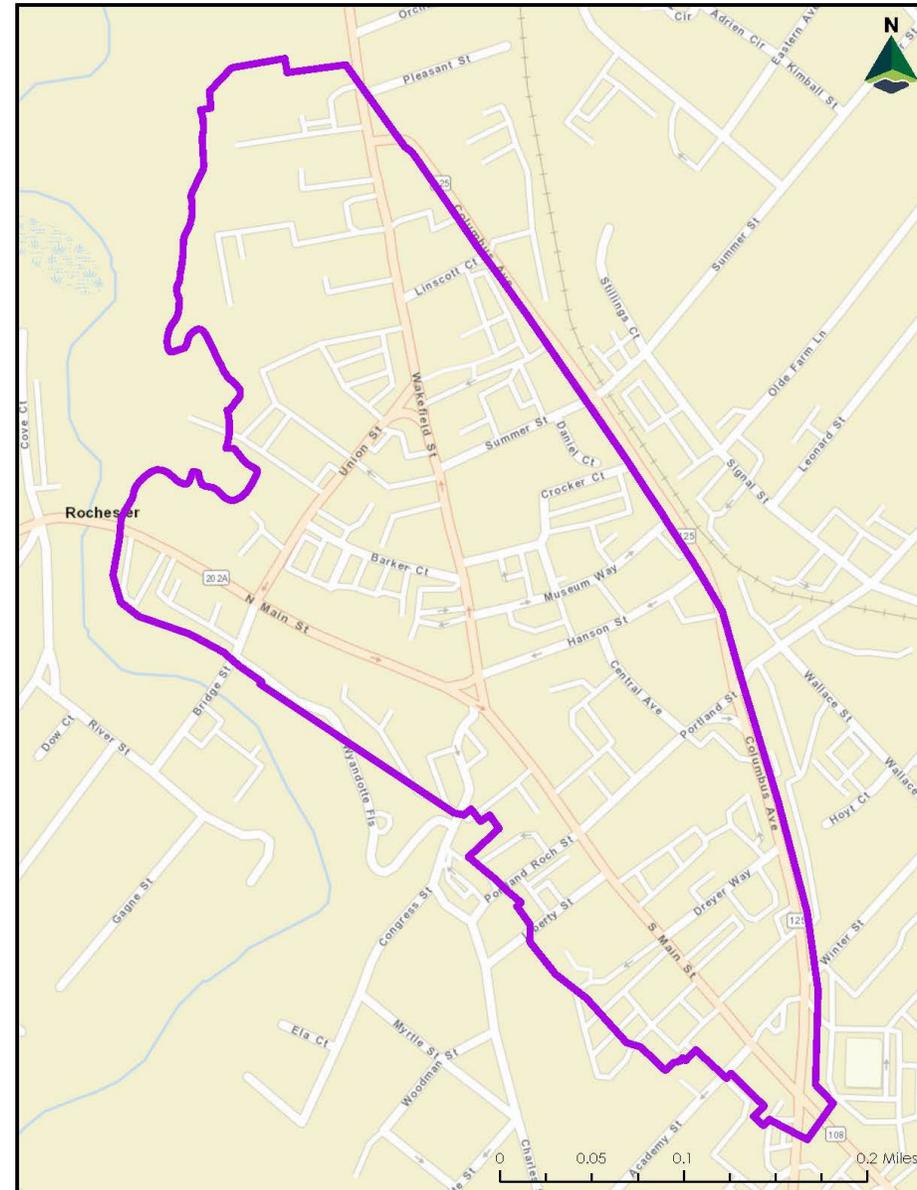
WHO CAN DO A WALK AUDIT?

- *Everyone and anyone!*

Sample Audit Review



Geographic Scope



Resources/Initiatives to Coordinate With

Sidewalk
inventory/assessment
of Rochester from
2019

Economic
Development
Strategic Plan Update

CDBG Program goals
and objectives

Existing Rochester
Riverwalk Plan and
Update

Parking Review
Commission
recommendations

Future Econ Dev
Master Plan goals or
downtown goals?

Streets/Sidewalks
Ordinance initiative

Union Street Parking
Lot reconstruction

Utilize volunteers
from Age-Friendly
Group

Senior Center
programs

Youth programs

Recreation Chapter of
Master Plan

Discussion

Are there any DPW or related infrastructure projects happening in upcoming month(s)?

Who can we reach out to find people with various abilities to participate in the audit?

What day(s) will work best to do the in-person version of the audit?

Should we offer a virtual audit option?

Do we encourage them to engage other pedestrians that are not auditing?

LET'S CHAT!

COMMUNITIES FOR HEALTHY AGING TRANSITIONS

Appendix D

Question	Response Options
Your Initials	N/A
Date and Time	N/A
What are you observing?	Sidewalk Problem; Street Crossing Problem; Safety/Appeal; or Public Transit Access
If observation = sidewalk problem, then these questions will appear:	
Is the surface of the sidewalk damaged?	Yes, No
What types of surface defects?	Large Cracks, Raised/Sunken Sections, Missing Material, Dangerous Curb Cut
Are there any obstacles blocking the sidewalk?	Yes, No
What kind of obstacles?	Hydrants, Overgrown Vegetation, Fixed Sign, Fixed Light, Utility Pole, Mailbox, Drain, Water, Moveable Objects
Is the sidewalk continuous (no segments are missing) and complete (it doesn't randomly end)?	Yes, No
If observation = street crossing problem, then these questions will appear:	
Which street is being crossed?	N/A
What is missing at this street crossing?	Traffic lights and/or stop signs, Visible crosswalk markings, Sound-operated cross signals, Pedestrian crossing signage, Accessible push-to-talk signals; Ramp from sidewalk to street level; Ground surface indicator
If observation = safety/appeal, then these questions will appear:	
What is the safety or appeal improvement needed at this location?	More seating, More shade, Better landscaping, Bike racks, Lack of pedestrian lighting, Unsafe street crossing, Unsafe sidewalk, Unsafe for bicyclists
What makes this unsafe?	N/A
If observation = public transit access, then these questions will appear:	
Can pedestrians safely access and depart from the transit stop?	Yes, No
Does the transit stop or station have suitable seating for waiting passengers?	Yes, No
Is there a street crossing close to this public transit stop to get to the other side of the road?	Yes, No
These final questions will appear for all observation types	
Submit photos of the observation	N/A
Where is this observation located?	N/A

VOLUNTEER TO PARTICIPATE IN THE DOWNTOWN ROCHESTER ACCESSIBILITY AUDIT

September 25, 2023
3pm & 5pm



Downtown Rochester Accessibility Audit

September 25, 2023 ~ 3pm & 5pm

Join us for a walk and roll through downtown Rochester to help make our streets and sidewalks more accessible for all!

Volunteers are needed September 25th to observe and evaluate the accessibility of streets and sidewalks in downtown Rochester. We will meet at the Rochester Performance & Arts Center (RPAC) to begin the audits. There will be two chances to participate: the first audit is at 3pm, the second audit starts at 5pm (you choose!). Refreshments will be provided. All ages and abilities are welcome! RSVP is required by September 22nd one of three ways:

1. Click on the QR code for a registration form
2. Email: acleland@strafford.org
3. Call 603-994-3500



Organized by:



Appendix F

Rochester Accessibility Audit

<p>Demographics-></p>	
<p>Scan me with your smartphone camera!</p>	<p><-Inventory</p>
	<p>Only for segments 1-8 (Sidewalks)</p>

Survey123 Instructions

Download the app

Simply scan one of the QR codes using your camera app on your smart phone. A popup should appear to open the link in your browser. Click on that popup and at the bottom of the opened webpage it should say "If you don't have the Survey123 field app, please download it first." There will be a link to the apple or google store right there.

The name of the app is Survey123 for ArcGIS. If the app requests access to your location, select "Yes". If the app requests to access photos, media, and files on your device, select "Allow". You do not need an account and you do not need to sign into the app to access this survey.



Google Play Store Icon



Survey123 App Icon



Apple App Store Icon

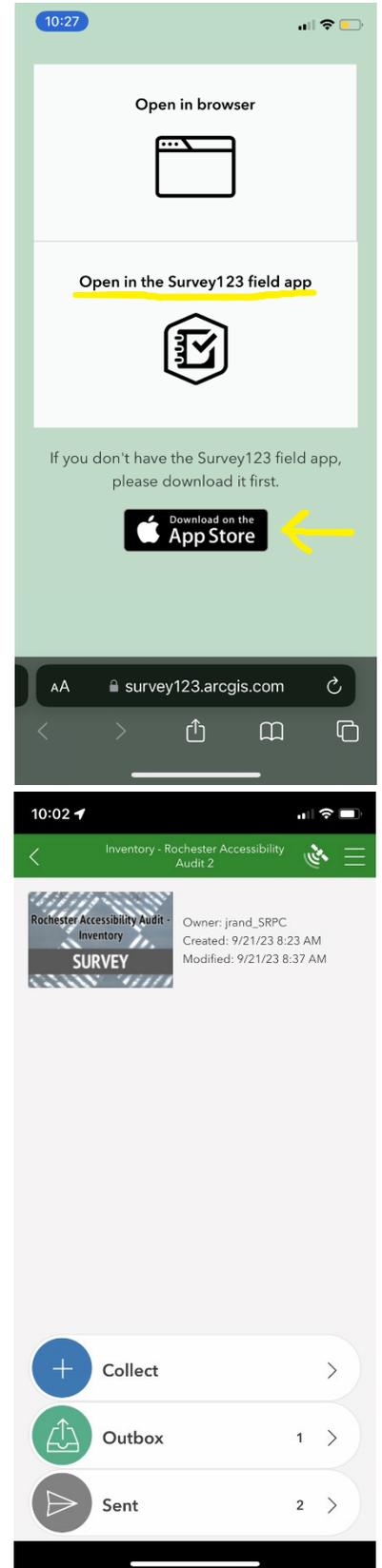
Download the survey

Once the Survey123 app is installed, once again open your camera on your smartphone and scan each QR code one by one to confirm you have all each of the surveys you need:

1. If you are in a group assigned to public buildings: You will need to download the "Demographics" survey and "Public Buildings" survey.
2. If you are assigned to a sidewalk route: You will need to download the "Demographics" survey and "Inventory" survey.

Using the Inventory Survey in app

We will go over installing the Demographics survey in the meeting before the audit. However, the "inventory" will be collected several times. For each unique sidewalk, crossing, safety or public transit observation, you will record a new survey.



It is **required** to take a photo of each observation and to identify your location by clicking the “crosshair” at the bottom of the survey.

Once you have recorded your observation, taken a photo and identified your location, you can press the green check mark on the bottom right of the survey.

Submission of Survey

It is **highly recommended** that you save each response in the “**outbox**” rather than “send now”. This will greatly reduce the wait time for the data to submit to the cloud. At the very end of the audit, getting onto a Wi-Fi network and uploading the data will be the best option. **At the end of the audit, you can connect to the Wi-Fi at RPAC for upload. Please do not forget!**

After you save to the outbox, the survey will bring you back to the homepage giving you options of “collect” or “outbox”. Select “collect” to load a blank new survey and select “outbox” if you want to make any edits to your previous survey or submit all at the end of the session.

Remember below with each observation recorded!



Keep in mind:

1. If there is a section of sidewalk with several cracks, you can take up to 3 photos of all the cracks and submit one observation. Feel free to take a photo of the whole area or multiple photos and move on if it is all the same problem. Example to the right:
2. Keep your distance from the crosswalk if you do not plan to cross to avoid driver confusion and reduce risk.
3. Only survey the segments assigned on your map. Do not cross the street unless you are getting to another segment/continuing a segment.
4. Be sure to think of safety, appeal, improvements and accessibility throughout your observation.



Demographics

The questions in this survey provide context for your observations in the audit. Your responses to this survey will not be tied to your observations in any outside reporting. Your height impacts where your eye level is for safety issues, your vision impairments may impact how easy or difficult it is for you to find wayfinding signs, etc. If you have any questions or concerns about how this data will be used, please ask an SRPC staff member.

Name
Example: John Smith

*Names will not be included in the data analysis or shared for outside reports. Just for reference.

Initials
Example: JS

*This is to tie the inventory survey with the demographics survey. You will use your initials in each survey response for the inventory.

Age Group
Under 18
18-24
25-34
35-44
45-54
55-64
65 and over

Height
Under 4 feet
Between 4 feet and 4 feet 6 inches
Between 4 feet 7 inches and 5 feet
Between 5 feet 1 inch and 5 feet 6 inches
Between 5 foot 7 inches and 6 feet
Between 6 feet 1 inch and 6 feet 6 inches
Over 6 feet

Do you have any vision impairments?
Yes, corrected with glasses/contacts
Yes, not corrected with glasses/contacts
No

Do you have any hearing impairments?
Yes, corrected with hearing aids
Yes, not corrected with hearing aids

No

Do you have any mobility impairments?
Write in yes or no

Inventory

Initials
Example: JS

Date and time
Example 9/25/2023 3:00PM

*This will auto-populate each time you start the survey. No need to fill in.

What are you observing?
Sidewalk Problem
Street Crossing Problem
Safety/Appeal
Public Transit Access

***Skip to the section below that applies to the observation type that you selected in this question.**

Sidewalk Problem

Is the surface of the sidewalk damaged?
Yes
No

IF YES: Sidewalk is damaged.

What types of surface defects?
Large cracks
Raised/sunken sections
Missing material
Dangerous curb cut
Other (open response)

*See table on next page for examples

Surface defects	Description	Example (photo)
Large cracks	Cracks over one inch wide	
Raised/sunken sections	Sections of sidewalk dip and raise inaccessibly	
Missing material	Over one inch wide of material missing from sidewalk	
Dangerous curb cut	Slope or condition is dangerous between driveways or paths	
Other (open response)		

Are there any obstacles blocking the sidewalk?
Yes
No

*Include items that partially block or completely block a sidewalk

IF YES: Obstacles are blocking the sidewalk partially or fully

What kind of obstacles?
Hydrants
Overgrown vegetation
Fixed sign
Fixed light
Utility pole
Mailbox
Drain
Water
Moveable Objects
Other (open response)

Remember below with each observation recorded!



Photos



Locate



Confirm



Save



Collect

Street Crossing Problem

Which street is being crossed?

Example: North Main Street

*If you do not know which street is being crossed, please include a photo for reference

What is missing at this street crossing?

Traffic lights and/or stop signs

Visible crosswalk markings

Sound-operated cross signals

Pedestrian crossing signage

Accessible push-to-walk buttons

Ramp from sidewalk to street level

Ground surface indicator

Other (open response)

Missing at street crossing	Description	Example (photo)
Traffic lights and/or stop signs	Traffic light/sign needed to stop traffic to allow pedestrians across in highly traffic area.	
Visible crosswalk markings	Crosswalk markings are faded or difficult to see for a pedestrian or car.	
Sound-operated cross signals	Audio-assisted warning sound to cross the road at crossings with traffic lights	

<p>Pedestrian crossing signage</p>	<p>Signage on either way of traffic pointing to crossing ahead as warning to cars.</p>	
<p>Accessible push-to-walk buttons</p>	<p>Button available to stop traffic for pedestrians to cross in timely manner</p>	
<p>Ramp from sidewalk to street level</p>	<p>There is a ramp that allows access to the crossing from the curb</p>	
<p>Ground surface indicator</p>	<p>This is the bumpy surface on the ramp. It must be on the ramp next to a crossing.</p>	
<p>Other (open response)</p>		

Remember below with each observation recorded!



Photos



Locate



Confirm



Save



Collect

Safety and Appeal

What is the pedestrian safety or appeal improvement needed at this location?
More Seating
Better Landscaping
Lack of Pedestrian Lights
More Shade
Bike Racks
Unsafe Sidewalk
Unsafe Street Crossing
Other (open response)

*Please capture the psychological safety needs and theoretical improvements

What makes this unsafe?
Open response

*Leave blank if observation seen as safe

Remember below with each observation recorded!



Photos



Locate



Confirm



Save



Collect

Appendix G

Rochester Accessibility Audit for Public Buildings

<p>Demographics-></p>	
<p>Scan me with your smartphone camera!</p>	
	<p><-Public Buildings</p>
	<p>Only for segment 9</p>

Survey123 Instructions

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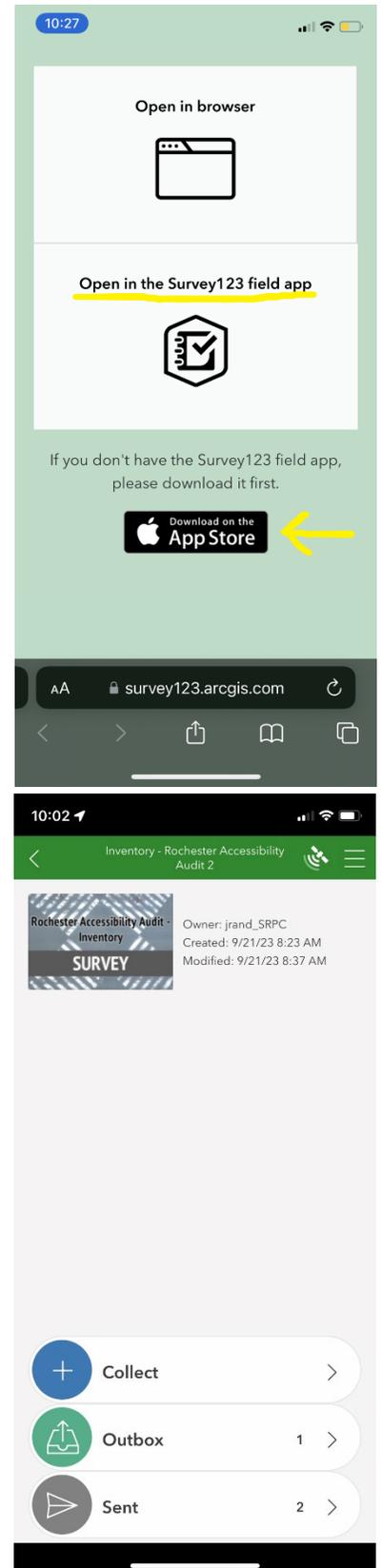
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Submission of Survey

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Remember below with each observation recorded!



Photos



Locate



Confirm



Save



Collect

Keep in mind:

1. If there is a section of sidewalk with several cracks, you can take up to 3 photos of all the cracks and submit one observation. Feel free to take a photo of the whole area or multiple photos and move on if it is all the same problem. Example to the right:
2. Keep your distance from the crosswalk if you do not plan to cross to avoid driver confusion and reduce risk.
3. Only survey the segments assigned on your map. Do not cross the street unless you are getting to another segment/continuing a segment.
4. Be sure to think of safety, appeal, improvements and accessibility throughout your observation.



Demographics

The questions in this survey provide context for your observations in the audit. Your responses to this survey will not be tied to your observations in any outside reporting. Your height impacts where your eye level is for safety issues, your vision impairments may impact how easy or difficult it is for you to find wayfinding signs, traffic signage etc. If you have any questions or concerns about how this data will be used, please ask an SRPC staff member.

Name
Example: John Smith

*Names will not be included in the data analysis or shared for outside reports. Just for reference.

Initials
Example: JS

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Under 18
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45-54
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65 and over

Height
Under 4 feet
Between 4 feet and 4 feet 6 inches
Between 4 feet 7 inches and 5 feet
Between 5 feet 1 inch and 5 feet 6 inches
Between 5 foot 7 inches and 6 feet
Between 6 feet 1 inch and 6 feet 6 inches
Over 6 feet

Do you have any vision impairments?
Yes, corrected with glasses/contacts
Yes, not corrected with glasses/contacts
No

Do you have any hearing impairments?
Yes, corrected with hearing aids
Yes, not corrected with hearing aids

No

Do you have any mobility impairments?
Write in yes or no

Public Buildings

This survey should be filled out once for each entrance of the building (if the building has 2 public entrances, complete the form twice).

Facility Name
<i>Example: City Hall</i>

- If multiple entrances, you can specify which one you are assessing if you'd like. Example: "City Hall – Front/Wakefield St entrance"

Facility Entrance

Picture of entrance
Attach up to 3 pictures of the entrance.

Please include any stairs or ramps required to get to the door.

The entrance is at the top of the
Stairs only
Ramp only
Stairs and Ramp
Neither

Is the door level all the way through (no steps, raised thresholds, or other obstacles for wheels on either side or in the door frame)?
Yes
No



Is there an automatic door?
Yes
No



IF YES: There is an automatic door

Is the automatic door functioning?
Yes
No

IF NO: There is not an automatic door

Questions about the door: (Please open and close it a couple times)

Is it heavy?
Yes
No

Does it stick?
Yes
No

Is it easy to open?
Yes
No

Step inside. Could a wheelchair user fully enter the facility?	If you see
Yes	Wide open space large enough for a wheelchair to turn around, flat and even floors
No	Stairs, very narrow hallway or vestibule, another door, things in the way

IF NO: a wheelchair cannot fully enter the facility

Why would a wheelchair user not be able to enter this facility?	What to look for:
Stairs	Are there stairs or steps that you are forced to use inside this entrance? Examples: step up or down from the door frame OR a short hall with stairs and no other way to access the rest of the building
Too narrow (less than 5 feet)	If a hallway is present, measure it to make sure that it is at least 5 feet wide
Items blocking path	If there are objects in the way, is there at least 5 feet of clearance around them?
Other (explain)	



Facility Restroom

Is there a public restroom in this facility?
Yes
No

IF YES: There is a public restroom

Are there any stairs between the entrance to the facility and the restroom door?
Yes
No

IF YES: There are stairs between the door you are assessing and the restroom

Is there another route to the restroom?
Yes
No

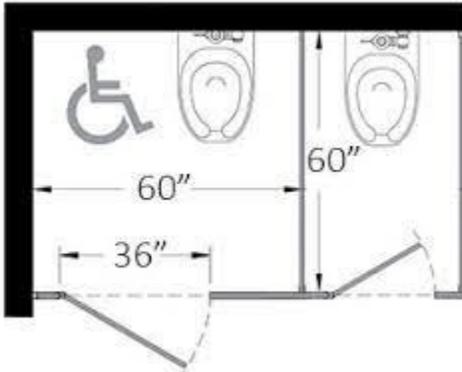
Is there space (3 feet) to get a wheelchair around the door into the restroom?
Yes
No

Is there an automatic button for the restroom?
Yes
No

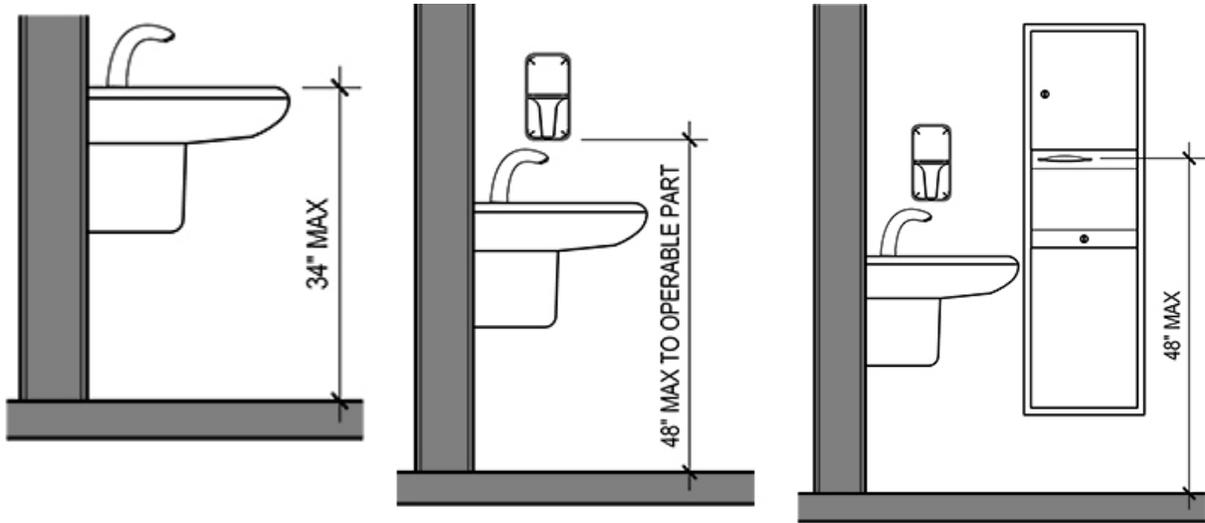
If the restroom has multiple stalls, check all of the wheelchair accessible features:
Stall
Sink height (<34 inches from the floor)
Soap dispenser height (<44 inches from the floor)
Paper towel or hand dryer (<48 inches from the floor)
ADA height toilet (17-19 inches)
Grab bars

Stall

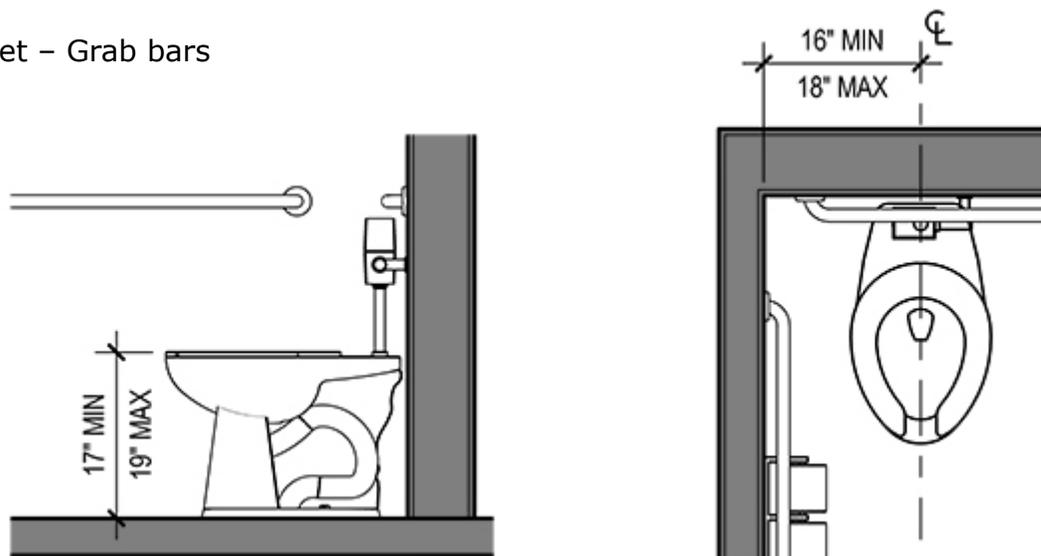
ADA Bathroom Partition Size



Sink - Soap - Towels



Toilet - Grab bars



Is there clear wayfinding to find the restrooms?
Yes
No

Navigating the facility

Is there clear wayfinding signs in the building?
Yes
No

Is there wayfinding in braille?
Yes
No

IF YES: There is braille

Is the braille wayfinding at the correct height (minimum of 48 inches)?
Yes
No

Is there sufficient lighting to clearly read signs?
Yes
No

If the facility has more than one level, are all levels accessible by a public ramp or elevator/lift?
Yes
No

from the Montana Disability and Health Program Promoting inclusive community health initiatives

Public Health Issue

About one out of five people in the United States lives with some type of disability, including physical, vision, mental health, cognitive, intellectual and developmental disabilities, and other health conditions that cause limitations in one or more major life activities. In 2014, Montanans with disabilities self-rated their overall health as fair/poor (41%), indicating a substantially lower quality of health compared to persons without disabilities (7%).

Program Overview

The Healthy Communities Coalition convened by Lewis and Clark Public Health used the Community Health Inclusion Index (available at: <http://www.nchpad.org/1273/6358/Community~Health~Inclusion~Index>) to identify priorities for improving the inclusion of people with disabilities in its work. Assessments were conducted by an Accessibility Ambassador from the Montana Independent Living Project. Results showed accessible and inclusive community resources that people with disabilities might have difficulty accessing because of challenges in the surrounding infrastructure (e.g., accessible active transportation options, signage). Findings strengthened the Coalition's commitment to include people with disabilities in its membership and in the Plan4Health Wayfinding System and Communication Plan for the Greater Helena Area. To support its commitment, 42 Coalition members participated in a Healthy Communities Workshop conducted by Mark Fenton with three newly trained inclusive interdisciplinary walking audit teams.

The interdisciplinary teams included four community design experts: 1) disability advisor; 2) public health professional; 3) engineer; and 4) planner. Each team led a group of workshop participants on one of three pre-planned routes to identify needs to improve: *mixed uses of land and varied destinations; active transportation networks; functional site designs and details; and universal safety, access and accessibility.* The National Center on Health, Physical Activity and Disability (NCHPAD) also provided training on additional resources (iCHIP) to support inclusive healthy communities.

Learning Objectives:

Summarize the unique contributions of disability advisors to interdisciplinary walking audit facilitator teams.

Review barriers to healthy community resources experienced by persons with disabilities.

Discuss potential programmatic, policy, systems, and environmental (PPSE) changes to remove barriers.

Identify resources to support PPSE changes such as MTDH Accessibility Ambassadors and NCHPAD's Inclusive Community Health Implementation Package (iCHIP) toolkit, available at: <http://www.nchpad.org/iChip>.

Making a Difference

After the walk audits, participants identified multiple PPSE changes that were communicated to city, county and state officials to increase the inclusion of people with disabilities in active transportation and healthy communities. Participants also reported increased awareness and stronger partnerships to use in their day-to-day work to improve the health and participation of people with disability and their families. MTDH Accessibility Ambassadors from Helena and other Montana communities who attended the training are planning and coordinating interdisciplinary team facilitated walking audits with a goal of reaching 400 community development stakeholders statewide over the next five years.

Contact Information:

Meg Traci, PhD; 52 Corbin Hall, Missoula, MT 59812; (406) 243-4956; meg.traci@mso.umt.edu

MTDH is a State Disability & Health Grantee of the Disability and Health Branch, Division of Human Development & Disability, National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). MTDH is a partnership of the Montana DPHHS and the University of Montana Rural Institute for Inclusive Communities. More information is available at: <http://mtdh.ruralinstitute.umt.edu>

In addition to CDC support, this project was made possible by a Plan4Health grant from the American Planning Association and American Public Health Association and by a Reaching People with Disabilities Through Healthy Communities grant awarded by the National Association of Chronic Disease Directors.

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When I walk around with friends or family, I find myself pointing out and educating the people I am with about what I learned about being inclusive to those with disabilities. I find myself checking my work to make sure it is inclusive. ~ Member of the Greater Helena Area Healthy Communities Coalition