

2025 Ann Arbor Parks and Recreation ADA Transition Plan Update

Introduction

On May 20, 2024, the Ann Arbor City Council adopted the [Ann Arbor Parks and Recreation Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\) Transition Plan](#) through [Enactment R-24-166](#). The resolution requires an annual update to the Parks Advisory Commission (PAC) and City Council. This is the first update presenting information from the onset of the Transition Plan through December 2025.

The goals of this update are to:

- Demonstrate the progress made on recommendations from the plan.
- Make modifications to the Plan's schedule or budget.
- Meet ADA requirements for reporting.

This update is part of a broader, ongoing effort to improve accessibility for people with disabilities in the City of Ann Arbor's park system. By implementing the Transition Plan, the Ann Arbor Parks & Recreation Service Unit is removing barriers to achieve program access—maximizing the talents and contributions of all community members. In doing so, the Service Unit upholds its core values of “stewardship, exceptional customer service, innovative improvements, integrity, community, excellent parks and spaces, and fun!” Internally, this update also works to foster a culture of ADA compliance within existing systems and processes.

The ADA Transition Plan is a living document, designed to evolve over time based on the Service Unit's priorities, available resources, and the community's changing needs. The Plan may also be modified as funding and other resources become available to support its implementation.

We look forward to continued progress in advancing accessibility and inclusion within the parks system. Through ongoing community feedback and collaboration, we ensure Ann Arbor's parks are welcoming and enjoyable for everyone.

Projects

Since the development of the ADA Transition Plan, the Ann Arbor Parks & Recreation Service Unit has implemented a variety of projects that improve accessibility through barrier removal. Specifically, an estimated 48 barriers have been removed through larger construction projects. These projects have primarily focused on the two highest priorities outlined in the plan:

1. Providing an accessible route in and out of a park or facility.
2. Providing accessible parking and routes within the park or facility.

It is important to note that these types of projects are more time and cost intensive than some of the lower priority types of barrier removal. Additionally, Parks staff is still communicating with Altura about best practices for tracking barrier removal completed through general maintenance.

The eight projects below go into more detail about the accessibility improvements made in each location.

Argo Cascades Universal Access Project (2022)

The consultants used for the ADA Transition plan reviewed the Universal Access Project at the end of construction. They identified eighteen barriers which were addressed prior to completion of the project. This experience highlighted the value of involving ADA specialists as part of the planning team. This project included:

- A new accessible watercraft launch
- Accessible paths
- An accessible picnic area
- Accessible parking spaces and repaving the parking lot
- Renovations and an addition to make the restrooms more accessible

Gallup Park Bridge (2024)

The Gallup Park Bridge was originally constructed in 1976, and the life expectancy of the structure had been reached. Issues with the bridge included the walkways being too steep for barrier free access and the wood surface becoming slippery when wet. The new bridge addressed the accessible pathways on and near the bridge, remediating two barriers identified in the Transition Plan.

Foxfire North Playground Addition (2024)

In response to a resident request, a new Oodle swing was installed in March 2024. The Oodle Swing is designed to encourage social play while swinging. A child can easily

transfer from a mobility device into the swing. Its shape allows children to sit or lay together in different ways while providing support. The swing's larger size also allows adults and children to swing together. While not a part of the barriers identified for this park, the addition provides an example of staff's understanding of the changing nature of accessibility needs since the initial audit.

Lockett Park Playground Alterations (2024)

This project featured the addition of:

- Engineered wood fiber to play areas
- A concrete “dub down” to support access to the play area from the sidewalk as the play surface compresses
- An accessible picnic table
- An accessible companion seat bench
- A natural play area to support different types of play and sensory experiences

These alterations removed 50% (4 of 8) of the barriers identified for Lockett Park. The remaining barriers include fixing the running slope of the trail through the park and access to and around the baseball field.

Barton Nature Area Border-to-Border Trail Segment (2024)

Addition of a 0.6-mile paved, accessible trail, and two accessible parking spaces. This new trail segment connects with the planned pedestrian tunnel between Barton Nature Area and Bandemer Park. The project included removal of 50% (2 of 4) of the barriers at this location.

Allmendinger Park (2025)

During the Allmendinger Park playground renovation in 2023, staff identified the need for pathway renovation and ADA accessibility improvements to align with the ADA Transition Plan. Construction began April 2025, and the project was completed October 2025.

The scope of work included the following:

- Paving the existing gravel entrance and turnaround
- Adding two new barrier-free parking spaces
- Renovating existing pathways
- Constructing new pathways for accessible connections throughout the park
- Installing accessible bleachers, grill and table

This project remediated 59% (17 of 29) of the barriers identified in the transition plan for Allmendinger Park. Remaining barriers for remediation are contained in the restrooms.

Fuller Parking Lot and Border-to-Border Trail

This project encompasses a full repaving of both the parking lots on the north side of Fuller Park, split into two phases. The goal of this project is to increase the public accessibility and functionality of the parking lots that serve this busy park facility. Additionally, the project included improvements a 0.4-mile segment of the Border-to Border-Trail with right-of-way improvements, which was not included in the plan.

Reconstruction of the east parking lot included:

- Repaving to provide a firm, stable, and slip resistant surface in the parking lot
- Restructuring the accessible parking spaces:
 - Five “accessible” spaces were converted into four accessible spaces and one designated van accessible space
 - Missing access aisles were added

This reconstruction accounted for approximately 5% (3 of 67) of the barrier removal required for the Fuller Park Pool.

Barton-Bandemer Pedestrian Tunnel (2025-2026)

This pedestrian tunnel will fill a critical gap on the B2B Trail and provide a safe pedestrian and bicycle gateway to the city in the North Main Street and M-14 corridor area. Currently, there is no safe and legal connection for pedestrians between the B2B Trail in Bandemer Park and Barton Nature Area or Huron River Drive.

The scope of work includes the following:

- Access to the South Barton Bridge
- Removed the small parking lot off of W Huron River
- Added a new accessible path connection

The parking lot and South Barton Bridge were identified in the Transition Plan under Hilltop Nature Area. This project would complete 100% (2 of 2) of barrier removal Hilltop Nature Area.

Budget

The projected budget for the City of Ann Arbor Parks & Recreation Unit to reach ADA Program Access is approximately \$19 million. With the exception of Argo Cascades Universal Access Park, project costs are listed in the table below.

DRAFT

Project	Project Cost
Gallup Park Bridge	5,188,285
Foxfire North	22,000
Lockett Park	100,000
Barton Nature Area Border-to-Border Trail	1,241,985
Allmendinger Park	533,990
Fuller Parking Lot and Border-to-Border Trail	937,893
Barton-Bandemer Pedestrian Tunnel	4,419,480

Please note that many of the projects do not have a way to easily isolate the costs of barrier removal or accessibility improvements due to how they are embedded in the work completed during construction.

GIS Pin Map

During the development of the Plan, an interactive Geospatial Information System (GIS) pin map was created for members of the community to geolocate exact locations for ADA improvements to occur. At this time, the GIS pin map is inactive. Future annual updates could include a reactivated GIS Pin Map to reflect the alterations to parks and facilities confirmed to be compliant, if desired. The authors of this document recognize that many maps created in municipal settings do not meet the standards for WCAG compliance and need alternative formats to ensure access for all community members. All of these will be considered as the team decides best practices for transparency and updates moving forward.

Staffing

The Transition Plan provided four recommendations the City could take to have an immediate impact on ADA compliance. The first of those recommendations was to appoint a full-time ADA Coordinator to help with the implementation of the Plan. In October 2023, during the development of the Plan, the city hired an Accessibility Coordinator housed in the Office of Organizational Equity.

Training

In collaboration with Altura, Parks and Recreation staff received ten trainings on ADA-related topics. Trainings were focused on the following topics:

- ADA Title II Overview
- Effective Communication
- Outdoor Developed Area Standards
- Role of the ADA Coordinator
- Accessibility Awareness – Etiquette

- Implementing the ADA Transition Plan

City-wide trainings implemented through the City's Learning Management System includes additional disability-related trainings. Specifically, staff are required to learn about the language access program which includes a demonstration of using an ASL interpreter.

PSAs, Policies, and Procedures

The City continued expanding inclusive recreation, education, and community support opportunities to ensure residents with disabilities can participate in civic life, recreation, and essential services. These efforts collectively:

- Increased accessible recreation opportunities
- Prevented unintended enforcement barriers
- Expanded adaptive instruction methods
- Improved public understanding of service animal rights

Programming

The Parks & Recreation and Senior Services units expanded adaptive and inclusive recreational opportunities across multiple facilities.

Hockey Access

In 2024, Sunday morning ice time included the Ann Arbor Rockets (American Special Hockey Association), a hockey team designed for individuals with intellectual, developmental, and physical disabilities.

Adaptive Kayaking

During the summers of 2024 and 2025, participants with a disability could learn how to kayak and try their skills with the support of staff. The program featured:

- Facilitation by a certified instructor and a trained support staff member (2:1 staff to participant ratio)
- Two private classes and the option to add a river trip
- Kayak fitting and time for making adaptations
 - Option to participate in a single kayak or tandem kayak

Buddy Walk

In September 2024 and 2025, Buhr Park hosted the Down Syndrome Support Team's annual Buddy Walk. The Buddy Walk is a one mile walk in which any can participate without special training. It celebrates the many abilities and accomplishments of people with Down syndrome.

Adaptive Golf League

Huron Hills was home to the University of Michigan Adaptive and Inclusive Sports Experience's (UMAISE) 3-week league in 2025. The league brought over 12 individuals with physical and intellectual disabilities together for a weekly 7-hole golf league.

Outdoor Access for Immunocompromised Participants

In February 2025, Buhr Park hosted two different immunocompromised groups and offered a safe outdoor winter activity. The group returned in September 2025 to use the rink as a safe recreation area.

Throne Labs Restroom Pilot

Five parks were used as locations for the 2024 Throne Labs pilot program. The overarching goal was to provide a safe and dignified public restroom option for all people regardless of ability, gender, race, housing status, culture, and age. The Throne restrooms exceed ADA standards to enable easy access for all members of the community.

Policy and Procedural Changes

Recreation Instruction Practices

- Modified aquatics teaching approach to accommodate sensory processing differences and neurodivergent participants.
- Emphasizes skill acquisition without requiring immediate face immersion.

Interdepartmental Access Coordination

- Snow Match and Code Enforcement coordinated to prevent discriminatory outcomes when residents are awaiting snow removal assistance.

Public Market Rules

- Public-facing Market Operating Rules and FAQ clarify that animals are prohibited except service animals, reinforcing ADA compliance and public understanding of access rights.

Ann Arbor Parks & Recreation Website

The Parks and Recreation Service Unit’s website is a component of the Parks and Recreation Service Unit’s overall information communications technology (ICT) system. The Ann Arbor Parks and Recreation Service Unit’s plan to maintain the website’s Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) compliance falls within the broader City of Ann Arbor’s efforts for compliance.

In April 2024, the Department of Justice published a rule that sets technical requirements for state and local governments to follow to make sure that their websites and mobile apps are accessible to people with disabilities. The technical requirements that public entities must meet under the rule are called the [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines Version 2.1 Level AA](#) (WCAG 2.1 Level AA).

The City of Ann Arbor utilizes Siteimprove, a software company providing an AI-powered SaaS platform focused on digital accessibility, digital governance, digital experience analytics, and search engine marketing. Through initial testing of 282 Parks and Recreation webpages within the a2gov.org website, Siteimprove yielded an overall score of 87.0/100 for accessibility as of September 26th, 2025.

Criteria	Description	Score (out of 100)
WCAG Level A	The minimum level of conformance. It is the easiest to achieve with minimal impact on a website’s structure or design.	93.9
WCAG Level AA	The midrange of conformance levels. Typically referred to in court proceedings and the goal for state in local governments.	92.6
Accessibility Best Practices	Checks related to content and code that has a significant impact on user experience but is not covered by WCAG.	93.3

The primary issues appearing on the Parks & Recreation Service Unit’s webpages related to ADA Title II are links not being clearly identifiable. The issue of links not being clearly identifiable seems to be a frequent false positive result from Siteimprove due to a discrepancy in how it scans the code and how GovStack, our content management system, codes it. These occurrences have since been reviewed and dismissed.

Concerns & Complaints

The City of Ann Arbor provides information for community members to file an ADA complaint by using the [ADA Grievance Form](#). The city has not received grievances related to Parks and Recreation since the onset of the Transition Plan.

The City of Ann Arbor is contacted many times during the year by community members who have concerns about accessibility. Filing a formal complaint is always available to community members, but the City works to resolve issues before they escalate to the Grievance procedure.

Submit accessibility questions or concerns to the Accessibility Coordinator by emailing OOE@a2gov.org.

Looking Ahead

This period of implementation highlighted challenges related to data collection, specifically integrating accessibility information across multiple systems while experiencing changes in staffing. While this limited the City's ability to fully evaluate conditions at the pace originally anticipated, it also clarified what tools and processes are needed to support long-term success.

More regular reporting between all functions of Parks and Recreation and the Accessibility Coordinator will work to improve the process for future reports. Additionally, the Parks Asset Management Plan will significantly strengthen future decision-making. As asset data becomes more complete and standardized, the City will be better equipped to prioritize accessibility improvements and align projects across departments.

The City remains committed to accessibility improvements, with funding and projects already identified through the Capital Improvements Plan (CIP). The CIP identifies \$250,000 annually between 2026 and 2031 specifically for Parks Accessibility Improvements. In addition to this, other capital projects will continue to integrate barrier removal in their funding.

Future Projects include:

- Gallup Fishing Pond Trail
- Bicentennial Park Improvements
- Barton Bridge Replacement
- Nature Area Track Chair Program
- Fuller Playground Improvements
- Mushroom Playground Improvements
- Buhr Park Ice Arena Improvements

Despite early implementation challenges, the City continues to work toward the budgetary and timeline goals identified in the Transition Plan. The improved data structure and alignment with the asset management framework are expected to support more

predictable project delivery, more transparent prioritization, and more efficient use of available funding in future plan years.

DRAFT