



CITY OF COLUMBIA, MISSOURI

Disabilities Commission

To: Mayor and Council Persons

From: Columbia Disabilities Commission

Date: 7/25/25

Subject: Recommendation to Create a Voluntary Business Accessibility Recognition Program – “Dawn Z Award”

The Disabilities Commission wishes to establish a voluntary accessibility recognition program for local businesses, to be known as the **Dawn Z Award**, and respectfully requests Council and Staff work with the Commission to refine the details and implement it. The goal of the program is to improve the community by encouraging local businesses to meet achievable, accessible standards. This is NOT an enforcement program, it is only for businesses who voluntarily wish to participate and the Commission believes it is consistent with its mission in City Code 2-347 to serve as a resource for the business community on the concerns of residents with disabilities.

Background:

The Commission wishes to promote disability access and inclusion within the business community through education and recognition rather than enforcement. The Commission has worked to develop a set of general features that can make a business accessible to people with a wide range of disabilities.

To encourage and support local businesses in improving access, the Commission proposes the **Dawn Z Award**, named in honor of our former member and lifelong disability advocate Dawn Zeterberg. Dawn was an engaged member of the community and lifelong advocate for people with disabilities. She sat on the Columbia Disabilities Commission for over 17 years and the City’s Public Transit Advisory Commission for over 11 years. Dawn was a staple at community events, local protests and frequently included messages of love on her motorized wheelchair.

Proposed Program Structure:

- **Voluntary Participation:** Businesses would voluntarily opt in to participate
- **Educational Purpose:** The program is intended to educate and support businesses, not to enforce any legal requirements.
- **Accessibility Features Survey:** The Commission has drafted a proposed survey of general features that can make a business more accessible (See Attachment A). This survey would be available to all businesses prior to their volunteering to participate
- **Review Process:** Participating businesses would be evaluated based on the survey criteria
- **Recognition:** Businesses that volunteer to participate and meet the criteria would receive the “Dawn Z Award” which could include public acknowledgement, a certificate, window decal, or other appropriate recognition.

The Commission would request staff to work to refine the details and work with the Commission towards implementation of the program. Thank you for your consideration.

DAWN Z BUSINESS ACCESSIBILITY AWARD

Goal: The goal of the program is to improve the community by encouraging as many businesses as possible to meet achievable, accessible standards.

DawnZ Award Procedure:

- (1) Business Volunteer to Participate
- (2) Conduct Surveys
- (3) Commission Reviews Results
- (4) Businesses Presented with Dawn Z Award

Proposed Survey Criteria

5 Points of Accessibility: Each business will be surveyed in these five points of accessibility.

- (1) Parking
- (2) Entrance
- (3) Interior (Inside Building / Ability to Navigate / Throughout)
- (4) Restrooms
- (5) Customer Service

(1) Parking

- Does the business have accessible parking?
- Are the spaces clearly marked and signs posted?
- Is there an access aisle adjacent to each accessible parking space?
- Are the spaces and access aisles marked in blue paint?
- Is there an accessible route to the entrance area (curb cuts, slope, no trip hazards, no vehicular hazards)?

(2) Entrance Area

- Are steps required to enter the business?
- Is there a ramp and handrails at the entrance?
 - Comment on Slope of Ramp:
- Is the door handle easy to grasp and not require twisting of wrist (or it has an automatic door)?
- Do inaccessible entrances have signs indicating where the accessible entrance is?
- Is the door a minimum of 34 inches wide?

(3) Interior

- Are there accessible tables available with removable chairs? (table height 28 to 34 inches)
- Is there a 32-inch clear path of travel to all key elements of the business?
- Is the floor surface smooth and free of trip hazards?
- Is there an accessible counter in sales and pick-up areas? (36 inches max)

- Are the self-serve stations within accessible reach? (15 inches min to 48 inches max)

(4) Restrooms

- Are bathroom doors 32 inches wide?
- Are there grab bars?
- Is there a clear floor space of at least 5 feet in diameter near the toilet?
- Is the toilet height between 17 to 19 inches?
- Are the sink, soap and dispensers all within reach of person using wheelchair?
- Is there proper signage outside each restroom with braille?

(5) Customer Service

- Does the business have a handheld menu for a customer to point to without communicating?
- Does the business have a plan to assist customers who are blind to understand available products and services?
- Did any aspects of the customer service stand out to you?
 - Comments:
- Does staff receive training to make accommodations for customers with disabilities?
- Does staff receive training on service animals?