

CoMO Accessibility Plan

Presented to the City Council
for consideration by the
City of Columbia, MO Disabilities Commission

Mission: The Columbia, Missouri Disabilities Commission envisions a community where the opportunities for citizens with disabilities are equal to those of the general population.

The Disabilities Commission works directly within the guidelines of the City of Columbia’s strategic plan, the vision and mission statements, and strategic priorities (see below) utilizing a frame of consensus organizing. According to Eichler (2007) and Fazio (2017, p. 43):

consensus organizing works to empower a community through the development of “people’s organizations” in which members of the community with similar interests would come together to confront and make demands on the existing power structure to create improvements for the whole community.

City of Columbia Vision Statement: Columbia is the best place for everyone to live, work, learn and play.

City of Columbia Mission Statement: To serve the public equitably through democratic, transparent and efficient government.

City of Columbia Core Values: Service, communication, continuous improvement, integrity, teamwork and equity.

City of Columbia Strategic Priorities: Organizational Excellence, Resilient Economy, Reliable Infrastructure, Safe Neighborhoods and Inclusive Communities.

Report Contents

1. Previous success and/or current projects of the Disabilities Commission.
2. The project timeline.
3. How the Disabilities Commission plans to align their future projects and discussions with the City of Columbia's strategic plan.

The Disabilities Commission continues to hear from citizens regarding any accessibility issues they may face across the City. Additionally, the commission works with City departments in regards to accessibility of new developments and projects. Some of the successes and bright points of the commission's work over the last year include the below.

- Collaboration with council to develop and implement a virtual attendance and participation policy for advisory city commissions. The Disabilities Commission has successfully piloted a program for virtual participation and attendance for their commissioners to attend commission meetings. This has allowed a consistent quorum to occur, leading to consistent commission business being conducted. This pilot program has created a sustainable model and practice for other advisory commissions to emulate once staff and equipment are in place.
- During demolition and construction of a new building at Broadway and 10th, the Disabilities Commission collaborated with City Council and the contractor to create and maintain a protected pedestrian pathway along Broadway that is utilized by many people every day.
- For the first time since the Disabilities Commission was created, the commission has a budget within the City. The commission plans to use this money to send at least two commissioners each year to the National ADA Symposium to learn how other cities have successfully made their communities more accessible for all persons. The information learned at the symposium will be shared with the commission and city council as needed, as well as shape future efforts and outreach of the Disabilities Commission.

Disabilities Commission strategic planning timeline:

Phase I: The Disability Commission voted to approve the initial drafting process of a Commission-specific strategic plan that lines up with the City of Columbia’s Strategic Plan. The purpose for this project is to quickly indicate alignment of Commission projects with the City’s priorities.

Phase II: The first draft was written by the Disabilities Commission Chair, followed by discussion and feedback from the Commission. Public input from interested groups was gathered. One town hall, and two community events were held to gather input from persons living with disabilities or caring for those with disabilities. The development, gathering of information, and finalization of the project occurred over one calendar year.

Phase III: The Disabilities Commission will present the Commission’s written strategic plan to City Council.

Phase IV (ongoing):

1. The Disabilities Commission will align commission priorities with the City’s goals.
2. The Disabilities Commission members will become active voices in assisting City Council on meeting goals as written.
3. The Disabilities Commission strategic plan will be reviewed on an annual basis, or after the City of Columbia updates their strategic plan.

NOTE on using this document: All “Strategic Priority Area(s)”, “Goal Statement(s)” and “Outcome Objective(s)” are taken from the City of Columbia’s Strategic Plan Report, published June 2021.

Strategic Priority Area: Organizational Excellence

City of Columbia’s Goal Statement: Create and support an engaged workforce that delivers an efficient, innovative, transparent and collaborative City government.

Outcome Objective One: Increase employee satisfaction with pay and benefits

City of Columbia	Disabilities Commission
Increase the percentage of employees satisfied with their pay from 25.8% to 60% by 2026 as indicated in the employee engagement survey.	Phase I: The Disabilities Commission will request that the City of Columbia complete a baseline study identifying the percentage of current City of Columbia workforce who have disclosed a disability.
	Phase II: The Disabilities Commission will request the City of Columbia, MO to increase employment of persons with disabilities by 5% each fiscal year until they can match national statistics of Persons with Disabilities employed. https://www.dol.gov/agencies/odep
	Phase III: The Disabilities Commission will request that the City of Columbia, MO will actively recruit and employ qualified persons with disabilities in an effort to decrease the disparity between employment of non-disabled persons and disabled persons. https://www.dol.gov/agencies/odep

Outcome Objective Three: Foster a positive, equitable organizational culture.

City of Columbia	Disabilities Commission
Improve positive responses to the items “I think that my organization respects individual differences and backgrounds (e.g., cultures, working styles, ideas)” from 73.9% to 80% by 2026 as indicated in the employee engagement survey.	The Disabilities Commission will work with City planners to ensure that “disability” is included in this question.

Outcome Objective Four: Improve the residents’ and visitors’ experience across City services.

City of Columbia	Disabilities Commission
(Action item) Review and streamline processes for City services that allow for ease of access to those services.	Work directly with City departments to consult on physical and virtual accessibility for City business, services, and events.
(Action item) Implement a comprehensive external communications plan for the City that includes website usability for all identities.	Develop a working group to collaborate on and provide monthly feedback to the City’s IT department regarding virtual accessibility.
No related item	Collaborate with the City to increase hours of operation for ParaTransit services to include opportunities rides for leisure and community engagement outside of regular working hours.

Strategic Priority Area: Safe Neighborhoods

Goal Statement: Equitably provide emergency services, crime and fire prevention, community risk reduction, emergency preparedness, public health and well-being, community policing and social services to ensure the city is considered safe for all residents and visitors while increasing public trust through accountable leadership.

Outcome Objective Two: Improve services to the City’s most vulnerable populations.

City of Columbia	Disabilities Commission
No related item	The Disability Commission will request funding from the City for Disability Commission Commissioners to attend training on how to train first responders. Trained Commissioners will provide training annually or as needed for City first responders and staff as needed.
No related item	The Disabilities Commission will collaborate with City marketing to promote the use of Smart 911 so citizens with disabilities can input their medical needs directly into the 911 system for first responder use.

Strategic Priority Area: **Reliable Infrastructure**

Goal Statement: Provide reliable, sustainable, and innovative organizational and infrastructure foundations for the efficient delivery of municipal services to meet the current and future needs of our residents and visitors.

Outcome Objective One: Maintain and expand Columbia’s infrastructure.

City of Columbia	Disabilities Commission
Increase the average remaining useful life of parks, recreation areas, trails, equipment and public facilities.	The Disabilities Commission will maintain an open collaboration with the Parks and Recreation Department in order to maintain and build new accessible park equipment, trails, and access.

Outcome Objective Two: Improve Columbia’s infrastructure to equitably expand where infrastructure is lacking.

City of Columbia	Disabilities Commission
Construct and/or repair at least 500 linear feet of sidewalk each year to improve access to neighborhoods as defined in priority by the sidewalk master plan.	The Disabilities Commission will collaborate with the City as needed regarding sidewalk placement, replacement and accessibility.
	The Disabilities Commission will provide feedback re: the difference between existing sidewalk repair and the Sidewalk Master Plan to insure this is accurately depicted in the strategic plan.
	The Disabilities Commission will collaborate with City Council regarding construction sites, the shutting down of sidewalks, and the use of inconvenience fees by contractors, and consider requesting a financial match to build the balance in the account of inconvenience

	fees so that existing accessibility projects can be fully funding / completed.
Increase the number of parks, recreation areas and trails in areas not currently being served and identified in the 2013 Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan.	The Disabilities Commission will maintain an open collaboration with the Parks and Recreation Department in order to maintain and build new accessible park equipment, trails, and access.
(Action Item) Install or reconstruct at least 25 curb ramps per year within underserved areas.	The Disabilities Commission will collaborate with the City on priority curb ramp placement as needed.

Strategic Priority Area: Inclusive Community

Goal Statement: Cultivate a safe and sustainable community focusing on equitable access, inclusive engagement, equal opportunity and treatment, leading with race.

Outcome Objective One: Increase equity comprehension and impact in City decision making.

City of Columbia	Disabilities Commission
(Action Item) Create an Office of Equity and Inclusion by 2022.	The Disabilities Commission will collaborate with and have regular interaction with the Director of the Office of Equity and Inclusion to discuss and promote equity in access throughout the City.
(Action Item) Adopt a race and equity toolkit, develop an equity and inclusion matrix, and analyze policies through a new racial equity lens by 2022.	The Disabilities Commission will collaborate with the City to adopt a disability and equity toolkit, develop an equity and inclusion matrix, and analyze policies through a new disability equity lens by 2025.
No related item	The Disabilities Commission will work with Council to advocate for the creation of and hiring for a full time Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Coordinator for the City of Columbia. NOTE: This person does not need to be an attorney.

Outcome Objective Two: Improve community engagement to include all identities, languages and needs.

City of Columbia	Disabilities Commission
Increase usage of contracted language interpretation services so that 100% of departments are using these services by 2025.	Collaborate with the City to include sign language (ASL), screen reader compatible software, and closed captioning within the “interpretation services” offered by the City.

Increase virtual accessibility and inclusivity rating to AAA for communication channels by 2026.

Create a working group to address and comment on virtual accessibility on a regular (e.g., monthly) basis.

references for "AAA":

<https://www.digitalaccessibilitycentre.org/index.php/blog/20-diary/187-the-icing-on-the-cake-the-difference-between-aa-and-aaa-compliance>

<https://www.wuhcag.com/wcag-level-aaa-websites/>

<https://support.marketing360.com/hc/en-us/articles/360010951740-Understanding-the-WCAG-A-AA-and-AAA-Accessibility-Grades>

Continue to collaborate with the City to provide virtual participation for Municipal meetings.

Collaborate with the City to provide meaningful captioning for all city meetings and making transcripts publicly available.

Collaborate with the City to provide closed captioning for in-person attendees to City Council meetings.

Outcome Objective Three: Ensure all members of the community experience equal opportunity and treatment in all interactions with City government.

City of Columbia	Disabilities Commission
Achieve a minimum representation of 18% Black, Indigenous and People of Color appointments on City Boards and Commissions by 2025.	Work with the City to include persons with disabilities in this goal.
Assess 100% of City buildings to ensure all are accessible and inclusive by 2026.	Work with the City to participate in and collaborate on building accessibility. Utilize funding from the City to pay for ADA training for Commissioners.
(Action Item) Achieve benchmark physical accessibility and inclusivity ratings for City facilities (e.g. hours of operation, staffing, public transport, meditation spaces, gender neutral changing areas and bathrooms, multilingual signage, lactation rooms, etc.)	Work with the City to reinforce the importance of and need for physically accessible spaces including but not limited to gathering spaces, meeting rooms, offices, entrances and exits, and family/caregiver restrooms with adult changing tables.

Strategic Priority Area: Resilient Economy

Goal Statement: Promote a sustainable and diverse economy through policy development and support for entrepreneurship, innovation and efficiency.

Outcome Objective Two: Expand the supply of affordable housing for low- to moderate-income members of the community

City of Columbia	Disabilities Commission
Outcome Objective Two	<p>Recommend the addition of “accessible” so the resultant phrase is “...supply of affordable and accessible housing...”</p> <p>Collaborate and explore the possibilities of creating a loan program or tax credit program for monies used to make home improvements related to accessibility (e.g., walk in showers; ramps)</p>

Outcome Objective Three: Reduce the burden of transportation to finding and maintaining employment and employees

City of Columbia	Disabilities Commission
(Action Item) Study ParaTransit ridership to identify opportunities to shift ridership to fixed routes.	<p>Collaborate directly with the City regarding ParaTransit ridership, concerns, and potential solutions.</p> <p>Collaborate with Transit in order to ensure timely ParaTransit rides and public transit.</p> <p>Collaborate with the City during purchases of updated bus fleet to make sure buses are accessible and space is not limited due to space for persons with mobility devices.</p>