

Southeastern Minnesota Center for Independent Living, Inc. Accessibility Assessment Findings and Improvement Options

Property of: **First Unitarian Universalist Church - Rochester**
Address: **1727 Walden Lane Southwest**
Rochester, MN 55902-0901

Conducted On: **September 2, 2015**
SEMCIL Staff: **Robert Weigel, Accessibility Specialist**

First Unitarian Universalist Church - Rochester requested an accessibility survey for several areas of their building to assure accessibility for the members of the congregation, as well as visitors. The assessment examines the courtyard, restrooms, sanctuary, educational rooms, kitchen, conference room and parking lot and includes recommendations to improve accessibility. SEMCIL staff did an onsite assessment of the church on September 2nd, 2015.

Courtyard

The courtyard has two entrances. There are light switches that meet recommendations located at the maximum 48" above the floor surface. An accessible entrance marking is not provided on either doorway to the courtyard. If one entrance is used for accessibility, it would be recommended to mark the entrance with a sign using the International Symbol of Accessibility.

The first entrance has a double leaf doorway containing two 29" doors and a 4-1/2" step to the outside. This entrance is not accessible. At least one active leaf of a double leaf doorway must have a clear opening of 32" minimum. A landing and ramp should be utilized at the 4-1/2" step to gain accessibility.

The second entrance door has a clear opening of 33" which exceeds the recommended 32" minimum. The door uses a turn-style knob for operation. A lever handle is recommended for accessibility. There is a 60"x56-1/2" level landing outside on the pull side of the door. When doors are subject to locking, it is recommended to have a 60"x60" minimum landing for providing a safe turning radius. The building structure will not allow for a 60"x60" landing between the two exterior walls. A 4'2" ramp is providing access to the landing, but due to settling, there is a lip greater than 1/4" between the ramp and the landing. Floor surfaces shall have a 1/4" maximum change in vertical height. Railings are not required on ramps with a rise less than 6" although edge protection should be provided. This can be accommodated with two 4" minimum curbs or flared sides.

The surface outside consists of multiple concrete slabs. The slabs have settled over time and produced many lips greater than 1/4". Smoothing this surface would be recommended.

Options for improved accessibility:

- Provide signage for directing people to the accessible exit using the International Symbol of Accessibility (fig. 1) with raised/brail lettering at a height between 48" and 60" to the lettering (fig. 2).
- Use lever handle door knobs to provide better accessibility
- Grind or replace concrete to provide a smooth traveling surface
- Install ramp side flares or edge protection on the ramp to eliminate the risk of falling off the side of the ramp (fig. 3)

Restrooms

There is a men's and women's restroom on the main floor. They have appropriately mounted accessible signs marking each bathroom. Both have doorways with at least 32" of clearance and lever door handles as well as door openers. The soap dispensers, paper towel dispensers, and mirrors are all mounted at appropriate heights within both restrooms.

The women's restroom has a counter with sinks installed in it. The height of the counter is 31", which meets the maximum 34" guidelines, but the knee clearance under the counter is 23-1/2". The minimum knee clearance for accessibility is 27" minimum. At least one of the sinks in the restroom should meet this knee clearance recommendation. There are three toilet compartments within the restroom. When there are two or more toilet compartments, at least one should be wheelchair accessible and at least one should be ambulatory accessible. The wheelchair accessible compartment is 5'x6'5" and there is 52" to the front of the toilet. This meets the required dimensions for a wheelchair accessible compartment. The toilet is located in an appropriate position 18" from the side wall and is at an appropriate height. The grab bars mounted around the toilet are of appropriate lengths, but are at a height of 37" above the floor to the top of the bar. The recommended height for grab bars is 33"-36" above the floor to the top of the gripping surface.

The men's restroom has a sink, a urinal, and one toilet compartment. The toilet compartment is 5'x9'8" with an in-swing door. There is appropriate clear floor space within the compartment. The toilet is of an appropriate height and location within the compartment as well as the toilet paper dispenser. The grab bars within the toilet compartment are at heights greater than 36". Grab bars should be located at a height 33"-36" above the floor to the top of the gripping surface. The urinal is at an accessible height, although not required. The sink has 32" of knee clearance which meets the 27" minimum recommendations, but it is at a height of 34-1/2" above the floor. This should be at a maximum of 34" above the floor. The door entering the restroom is of appropriate size but swings into the clear floor space for the sink and there is not a clear 60" turning space beyond the swing of the door. Reversing the swing of the door would allow for appropriate clear floor space within the restroom.

Options for improved accessibility:

- Provide at least one cut out for sink accessibility with at least 27" of knee clearance (fig. 4). Install insulation around pipes free of sharp/abrasive surfaces to provide protection.
- Adjust grab bars to 33"-36" above the floor (fig. 5).
- Lower sink to ensure the front is at a height no higher than 34" measured to the higher point of the rim or counter top (fig. 6)
- Reverse the door swing so that it does not interfere with the clear floor space within the restroom.
- Provide motion detection light switches.

Sanctuary

At the entrances to the sanctuary, most of the doorways in the open position provide at least 32" of clear opening space, meeting accessibility guidelines. The door entering the hallway from the elevator area has an automatic opener. There is one set of double leaf doors entering the sanctuary on the elevator side. For double leaf doors to meet accessibility guidelines, one of the leaves should have an opening of at least 32". When both are open, the doors provide a clear opening of 43". These doors do not have an automatic door opener. The lights switches entering the hall from the elevator area are not located near the entry doors. Motion sensor switches may remedy this issue.

The worship area seating is made up of chairs rather than pews. This allows the congregation to easily change the seating arrangement so that a wheelchair user can sit beside their family members. However, since the aisles between the seating sections can vary, it is recommended that there be at least 36" of clear aisle space between the seating sections to allow a clear, unobstructed passageway.

The chancel area of the sanctuary is not accessible for persons with mobility impairments because of a series of stairs. The stage is raised 14-1/2" above the main floor. A ramp or lift may be provided for wheelchair accessibility or provisions could be made for an alternative accessible speaking location for a person with a wheelchair to be seen and heard. There are two stairways cut into the stage leading down to doors. These do not provide hand or guard rails. Hand rails down the steps and guard rails around the stage floor opening would be recommended for safety.

There is an exit to the outside from the sanctuary. The door provides an opening greater than the 32" minimum guidelines. When outside, there is a sidewalk leading down to the parking area. The side walk is very steep and does not meet slope requirements for an accessible route.

Options for improved accessibility:

- Provide handrails around the floor cutouts and steps in the stage. These should be mounted 34-38" from the floor or steps
- Install a 1:12 slopped ramp with handrails on both sides or install a platform lift to provide access to the stage.
- Consider light switches that can be operated by a single touch using little force or motion detection.
- Replace double leaf doors with one 36" or 42" door and/or provide automatic openers
- Grind or replace exterior side walk to remove large lip from settling

Classrooms

The classrooms appear accessible for most users. There is an accessible path of at least 36" wide that leads from an accessible entrance to the classroom doors. The doorway entrances into the classrooms are 33 ½" wide with level thresholds of no more than ½ inch. There is a countertop and sink located in the hallways of the classrooms. The top of the counter is at an appropriate height of less than 34" and allows for an appropriate parallel approach.

Options for improved accessibility:

- No recommendations

Conference Room

The conference room appears accessible to wheelchair users. There is an accessible path of at least 36 inches wide that leads from an accessible entrance to the conference room. The doorway entrances into the room is 33 ½" wide. Furniture in the room could be arranged as needed to accommodate a wheelchair. There are cabinets and a counter top with a sink located within the conference room. The sink is 31-1/2" above the floor meeting accessible guidelines and provides an appropriate parallel approach.

Options for improved accessibility:

- Provide pull-down and pull-out shelving to allow accessibility to the cabinets

Kitchen

The church's kitchen is designed to accommodate patrons preparing food for large groups of people. It features a large stove, long counter spaces, large sinks, and multiple storage options. However, this church's kitchen space is limited and would be considered very inaccessible. The entry door into the kitchen has 33" of clearance space, which meets accessibility guidelines. However, once inside the kitchen there are two food prep counters that are centered between the kitchen serving counter and the large appliances, these center islands occupy a substantial amount of the overall kitchen space. The space on either side of the food prep counters is approximately 29"-33", which is significantly narrower than the recommended 36" of clear route space. The food prep counters measure at 37" high, which make them significantly higher than the maximum accessible height of 34" and leaves them inaccessible for a wheelchair user.

The sinks feature levered handles and have enough knee clearance for a person in a wheelchair, but the exposed piping beneath the sinks could present a hazard of hot surfaces or jagged edges. Near the sinks is a paper towel dispenser that is over 61" above the floor. This is a height that is too high for wheelchair users and could be problematic for anyone that utilizes the kitchen. The kitchen cabinets would be considered inaccessible as they are hung over 40" above the floor and are not accessible from a seated position.

The microwave is also hung 67" above the floor to the top operating buttons, which is significantly higher than the recommended maximum height of 48". The kitchen stove features burner controls at the back of the range and a stove door that opens downward. This style of oven presents a risk for burns when used by someone in a wheelchair, particularly because of the lack of space between the food prep counter and the oven. At this time, a wheelchair user would not be able to independently use the stove/oven.

Options for improved accessibility:

- Provide some lower work surfaces for preparing a meal while seated.
- Insulate the hot water pipes in the open area under the sink to prevent burns.
- Consult a contractor to design the kitchen with appropriate clear and turning space
- Consider replacing the current stove/oven with a side hinged, slide-in range or a wall oven. One with an electric cook top with staggered burners and dials located on the front of the unit would be desirable and would ensure usability for all patrons.
- Replace unreachable kitchen cabinets with cabinets that have accessible features such as lazy-susans, pull down shelves and pull out work stations.
- Lower the height of kitchen features such as the microwave, paper towel dispenser, and soap dispenser to no more than 48" above the floor.

Fellowship Hall

The fellowship hall appears generally accessible. There is an accessible path of at least 36" wide that leads from an accessible entrance to the hall. The hall can be reached either by stairs or by elevator. There is an outside exit door which features a set of stairs to the front of the church. In the event the elevator is not functioning, there is not an alternative accessible route to the outside of the church for wheelchair users. This would be a serious concern in the event of a fire or other unforeseen event. The serving counter located between the kitchen and hall is 37" above the floor. This should be at a maximum 34" above the floor for accessibility. There is a phone in the hall mounted 60" above the floor to the top operable part. This should be at a maximum of 48" above the floor to the top operable part.

Options for improved accessibility:

- Provide an alternative accessible exit to the outside by replacing the current steps with a ramp or an enclosed lift.
- Lower the serving counter so that it is no more than 34" above the floor surface.
- Lower the phone so that the top most operable part is a maximum of 48" above the floor

Parking Lot

The main parking lot is located at the base of the building requiring individuals to climb a series of steps to reach the entrance. There are 3 marked accessible parking spaces provided near the buildings entrance. There are a total of 71 parking spaces for the building. Given the total number of parking spaces, 3 would be required to be accessible with at least one being van accessible. The accessible spots are 12' wide without marked access aisles. Accessible parking spaces should be a minimum of 96" wide with access aisles of at least 96" wide. The accessible parking space should be located on a surface with a slope no steeper than 1:48.

There are signs with words directing drivers to the accessible parking area but these signs do not use the International Symbol of Accessibility. Using the symbol is recommended for recognizing the area.

Options for improved accessibility:

- Provide signage using the International Symbol of Accessibility (fig. 1) to direct people to the accessible parking area.
- Repaint lines at main entrance so that there is at least 3 accessible spaces on level ground. Spaces should be at least 96" wide with a 96" wide access zone (fig. 7). Two spots can share one access zone. At least one spot must be van accessible with the access zone on the passenger side.
- Provide accessible parking signs in front of the parking spots a minimum of 60" above the ground (fig. 8).
- Provide "No Parking" signs designated for the access aisles.

Additional Recommendations to Enhance Accessibility:

- Accessible telephone with the top of the controls no more than 48" from the floor and with a clear space of 30"x48".
- Fire alarms, both visual and auditory installed a maximum 48" from the floor.
- First aid kits installed a maximum of 48" above the floor.
- An Evacuation plan should be in place for persons who are in wheelchairs, are blind, have an intellectual disability or mental illness, or who otherwise need help.
- Bookstands or lapboards for persons unable to hold hymnals or Bibles.
- Assistive Listening Devices (ALD) and other aids provided for persons who are hard of hearing.
- Ushers educated on the location of Assistive Listening Devices and how to assist persons wishing to use them.
- A roving microphone or acceptable alternative is important, especially for congregations who have a time of sharing, prayer requests, etc. Several additional items follow that are highly recommended.
- Worship services made available on audio and/or video recording.
- Sign language interpretation provided as needed.
- Adequate lighting provided throughout the worship area (sanctuary).
- Large print worship materials provided and ushers educated on their location and use. Large Print should be at least 14-point type, but may need to be larger for certain fonts.

The following auditory accommodations are recommended as helpful for persons with low vision:

- Verbal announcements given using a microphone.
- New hymns/songs introduced prior to the worship or in such a way that people with low vision can participate more fully during the worship.
- Exterior signs easily visible near the building entrance indicating location of accessible parking spaces and entrances.
- Interior signs easily visible noting the location of any available accommodations, i.e., accessible restrooms, elevators, Assistive Listening Devices, etc.
- Lighting for the area which speakers use which is directed to the front of speakers, toward the face, not from behind the person. This is important for persons who are hard of hearing or who rely on speech reading.

The following are also essential to aid persons who are blind to find their way around the building:

- Greeters and ushers available at building and worship area entrances and trained to orient new persons who are blind to the environment and guide them as necessary.
- Raised letters and Braille signs are provided at doorways to rooms, including classrooms and restrooms.
- Bulletins, signs, and other written material are available in Braille as needed.

Images From:
ADA Checklist for Existing Facilities, New England ADA Center



Figure 1

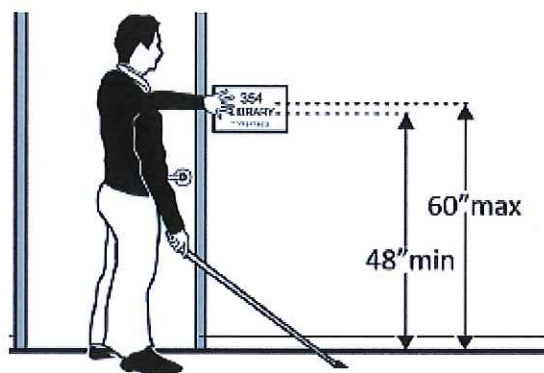


Figure 2

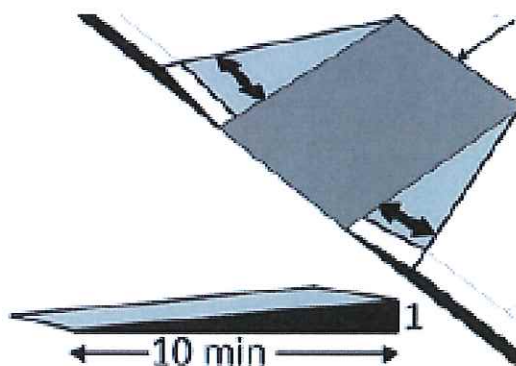


Figure 3

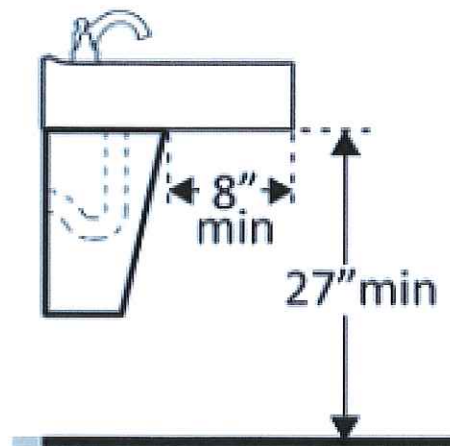


Figure 4

Images From:
ADA Checklist for Existing Facilities, New England ADA Center

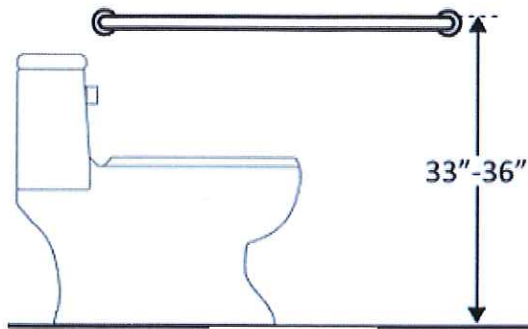


Figure 5

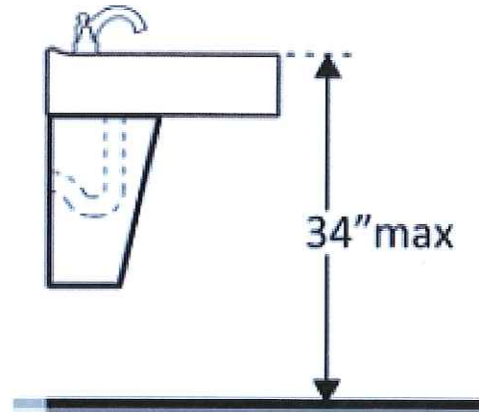


Figure 6

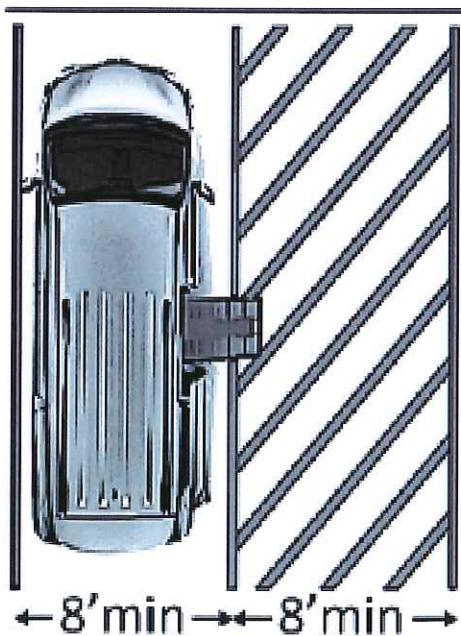


Figure 7

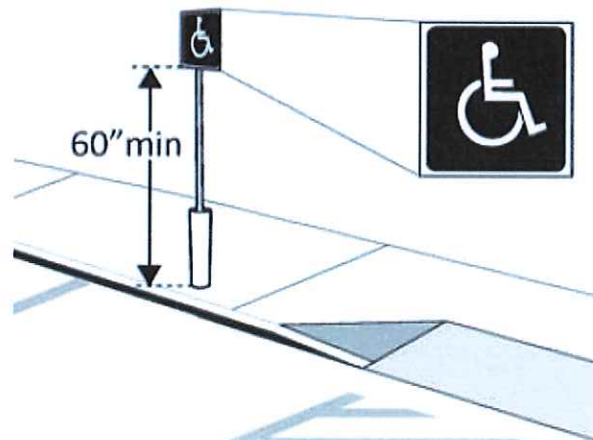


Figure 8