

MEMORANDUM TO SENATOR DOLE

Da: February 24, 1995

Fr: Alec Vachon *AV*

RE: GOOD NEWS ON ADA--KC-AREA COMMUNITIES MAKING GOOD PROGRESS

\* Attached is a KC Star article (1/25/95), pulled off NEXIS, on how well KC-area communities are doing in meeting ADA requirements--Overland Park, Prairie Village, Fairway, Westwood, Roeland Park, Mission Hills, and Mission. As you know, January 26th was a big milestone--state and local governments were supposed to have completed all architectural and structural changes to make their programs accessible.

\* Some highlights:

--All communities believe they are generally in compliance.

--To help meet requirements of the law, Prairie Village formed an "ADA Advisory Committee"--composed of department managers, the city attorney, the city administrator, and residents who are disabled or have disabled children. This is the smartest way to proceed--puts decisionmakers with disabled persons--sharply reducing the likelihood of complaints and promoting constructive action.

--In Fairway, the City Council meeting room (located in the basement of City Hall) is not accessible. Instead of moving the meeting place or installing an elevator, the City opted to install a video system in the Council Chamber--disabled persons can watch (and participate) from an accessible room on the first floor of City Hall.

--Roeland Park has been installing ramps in all new curbs over the past 10 years--at this point only about 20-25 blocks lack ramps. The new City Hall was built to be fully accessible. The Community Center is also accessible--but the City plans to add 2 more accessible entrances if the City's CDBG application is approved.

--Mission Hills had little to do because the city has been working on accessibility for years.

--Mission expects finish all curb ramps this year.

cc: Dan -  
Shale -  
Dennis -

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SECTION: ZONE/SHAWNEE MISSION; Pg. 4

HEADLINE: **CITIEES CONFIDENT THEY'RE COMPLYING WITH DISABILITY ACT;  
DEADLINE TO MEET REQUIREMENTS IS THURSDAY.**

BYLINE: MARISA AGHA, Staff Writer

BODY:

As the Thursday deadline for compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act approached, most area city officials were confident that their cities had met the requirements.

In a few cities, projects to make their facilities more accessible to the handicapped were under way but not complete.

The ADA, passed in 1990, was designed to to remove public and private barriers for the disabled.

Some advocates for disabled persons, while cheering the progress, said that the cities need to remain aware of possible concerns and realize that the transition process is a continual one.

"They've had 25 years to do this so I would really hope that most of them would be 95 to 100 percent done," said Sharon Joseph, an advocate for disability rights and a board member for The Whole Person Inc., a nonprofit group in Kansas City dedicated to helping people with disabilities. Joseph was referring to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which required cities receiving federal funds to make public facilities accessible.

"They still have a ways to go," said Joseph, a 40-year Overland Park resident and a wheelchair user. "Hopefully they're well on their way."

"Sometimes the cities think they're in code and they're not," said Kathy Estill, executive director of The Whole Person.

Specifically, Estill said that some cities do not have transition plans necessary to help them meet the federal ADA requirements.

Here's what area cities had to say about their progress on meeting the requirements of the act.

**OVERLAND PARK**

According to Alan Sims, Overland Park's ADA coordinator, the city needed \$ 1.1 million to meet ADA requirements under Title III, the provision that deals with accessibility. Sims said the major expense came from installing curb ramps on major thoroughfares and sidewalks in commercial areas.

The city plans to provide ramps on residential curbs when requested by citizens. The most extreme scenario, providing ramps throughout the city, would cost more than \$ 1 million, Sims said.

The city also plans to make accessibility improvements to park and recreation facilities, which should be completed this summer.

Sims said it hasn't been easy evaluating every public facility to ensure it satisfies the law's criteria.

"I'm not complaining, though," he said. "I think there is something to be said for eliminating barriers to people with disabilities. "

### **PRAIRIE VILLAGE**

In Prairie Village, the city has taken several actions to comply with ADA requirements.

"We feel that we are complying with the spirit and intent of the law," said Assistant City Administrator and City Clerk Sheila Shockey. She also is the designated ADA coordinator for the city.

The Prairie Village City Hall is accessible and meets ADA standards, Shockey said.

To help meet the requirements of the law, the city formed an ADA Advisory Committee made up of department managers, the city attorney, the city administrator and Prairie Village residents who are disabled or have disabled children.

They also created a long-range park plan to make all of the city's parks accessible by installing ramps and accessible woodchip surfacing. This year, the city will perform these renovations at Meadowlake Park and Bennett Park.

In addition, the city modified public curbs during major street reconstruction, removed all barriers around public pay phones in the Police Department, publicized the availability of interpreters for public meetings and court proceedings, and added grab bars to public restrooms.

The city's policy of requiring pool patrons to be able to swim unassisted in the deep end was modified. In one instance, a child was allowed to swim with the aid of a life jacket and additional guards.

Beginning this year, disabled residents are not required to take their household trash to the curb. The hauler will work out an arrangement with the resident.

According to its ADA transition plan, the city will continue to make changes to curbs during major street reconstruction, conduct a review of all public facilities and present a report to the ADA Advisory Committee.

### **FAIRWAY**

After a long process, the city of Fairway has complied with all of the ADA guidelines, officials said.

The city made improvements to the city's swimming pool, park facilities and all other public areas through the installation of sidewalks, ramps, hard-surfaced paths and parking spaces, said Henry Lopez, public works director and the city's ADA coordinator.

"We have met all the guidelines," Lopez said.

The City Council has also solved the problem for disabled residents who are unable to gain access to council meetings, which are held in the basement. The council approved installing a special video system so that disabled residents can watch, hear and speak to the council on the first level of the building.

There are no immediate plans to place an elevator in the city hall.

### **WESTWOOD**

In Westwood, the majority of work necessary to meet the standards was accomplished, said City Clerk Lisa Lene, who serves as the city's ADA coordinator.

The city has mostly met its requirements but it has two sidewalk curb ramp projects planned for this year. The work will be done at several locations throughout the city.

"It's an on-going project," Lene said. "The difficult part of it was getting a good reading on the law and getting ourselves familiar with it."

Last summer, the city built a ramp for the pool house at the city's public pool at the Woodside Racquet Club. The city also plans to install automatic front doors at the City Hall.

#### **ROELAND PARK**

Roeland Park's new City Hall is one every resident can visit, thanks to a wheelchair ramp in the rear of the facility and an elevator that stops at all three floors. The Roeland Park Community Center, which was established in 1984, also boasts accessible entrances and will receive two more if the city's application for a community development block grant is approved later this month.

The city's public works department is equally considerate of ADA standards, said Mayor Joan Wendel.

"For the past 10 years, all the new curbs and gutters the city has installed have ramp access at the street corners," she said, estimating that 20 to 25 city blocks currently lack new curbs and gutters.

#### **MISSION HILLS**

In Mission Hills, ADA requirements had a minimal impact on the city, said City Administrator Douglas Cruce.

"We have very little to do," Cruce said. The city has installed sidewalks and curb ramps over the years and the city hall is accessible on the ground level for disabled residents interested in attending council meetings.

The city has no public pools or parks that needed to be made accessible.

#### **MISSION**

Making all sidewalks accessible is a priority for the City of Mission. Public Works Director Stephen Weeks said the city has an ongoing curb and gutter replacement program that makes sure sidewalk inclines aren't too steep for wheelchair-users. Weeks estimated that 90 percent of Mission's sidewalks are currently accessible.

"We'll hit a hundred percent this year," he said.

The city is also working to make all public buildings comply with ADA standards. The City Hall has a ramp on its south side and officials plan to eventually install an automatic door at the building's main entrance. The city also encourages local businesses to foster an atmosphere of accessibility.

"Because there is a parking shortage in the city, they (businesses) will call on us occasionally about needing a disabled parking spot and we'll help them out," he said.

Staff writer Oscar Avila contributed to this story.  
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