



Downtown Madison Accessibility Report

Downtown Madison Inc. (DMI) - Beyond Compliance Task Force



February 2019

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About Downtown Madison, Inc. (DMI)

Downtown Madison, Inc. (DMI) is the voice of the central city and was formed over 35 years ago to address decaying conditions in downtown Madison. Today we see the results of our work in our healthy and thriving downtown. We are a not-for-profit advocacy organization that exists for and because of our over 450 members. A great region depends on a strong urban core, and that's where we come in. We represent the interests of businesses, residents, employees and visitors to ensure that our downtown is a great place to live, work, play and visit.

About the Downtown Madison Accessibility Report

This report is simply the beginning. Multiple factors, from an individual, city, state, and federal level impact the issues identified in this report that are directly from the disability community. Some of the issues identified will be easier to address than others, but most will require collaboration, resources, and a shift in policies, practices, or statutes. The Beyond Compliance Task Force will use this report to set goals, objectives, and activities, to ensure that this report is not the end of the effort. It should also be clarified that this report is not meant to be a compliance audit related to Titles II and III of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Downtown Madison, in general, needs to go beyond compliance of the ADA (or other statutes) to ensure full access and inclusion for people with disabilities.

Beyond Compliance Task Force

Downtown Madison Inc. (DMI) has multiple standing committees, including the Inclusiveness Committee. The Inclusiveness Committee is committed to working with our partners to identify, support and promote projects, economic opportunities and policies that encourage a full spectrum of cultural richness and viewpoints within DMI and our downtown community. In 2018, an ad hoc work-group of the Inclusiveness Committee evaluated changing the International Symbol of Accessibility on signage throughout the downtown, and then shifted to a broader focus of accessibility, and inclusion of people with disabilities, in downtown Madison. The Beyond Compliance Task Force was developed to identify issues, as well as the solutions and partnerships needed to address them, to achieve the goal of a downtown Madison that is fully accessible and inclusive of all people with disabilities, regardless of age. To best identify issues, it was imperative that the disability community itself identify those issues. A disability community engagement survey was the first step.

About the Disability Community Engagement Process

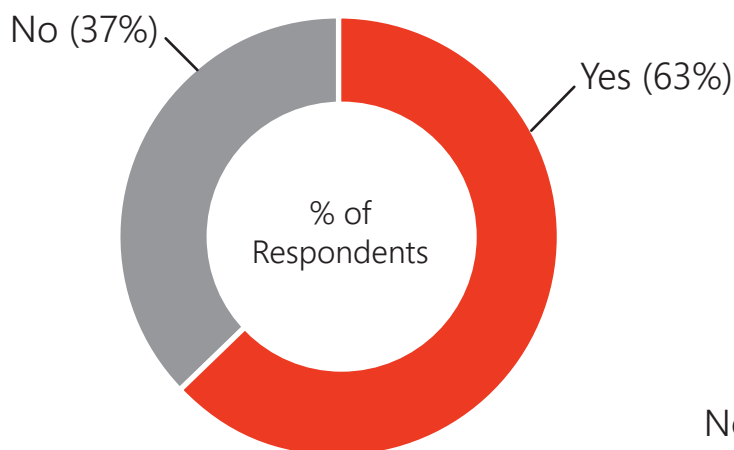
In October and November of 2018, a comprehensive community engagement survey was developed through a partnership between Access to Independence and Urban Assets. Access to Independence (ACCESS) is a nonprofit organization that provides advocacy, resources, and services to people of any type of disability, and of all ages. In addition to providing an array of individual and community impact services to people of any type of disability, ACCESS is consumer-controlled, which means that the majority of all staff members, as well as the members of its board of directors, are people with disabilities. Urban Assets is a Madison-based urban planning consulting firm that specializes in public participation and community engagement. Urban Assets targets projects that enhance local assets and are committed to accomplishing the very best for the communities with which they work.

Most importantly, this survey was developed with input from the disability community in the Madison area. A focus group comprised solely of people with disabilities was instrumental in creating the questions, and choices for answers, for the survey. Once developed, the survey was submitted electronically, with the availability of alternative formats, to over 80 individuals and disability-specific service providers. The survey was also shared with DMI membership to complete or share. The survey made clear that responses were to come from people with disabilities, and allies, to ensure that it reflected the voice of the disability community. Survey recipients completed the survey, and/or shared it through their lists and social media. By the end of November, nearly 90 responses were collected, and subsequently compiled. ACCESS and Urban Assets staff members analyzed the data to create this report.

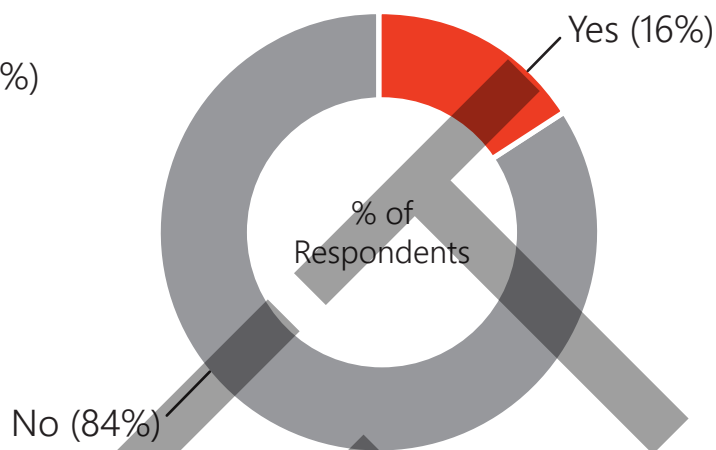


Mobility is the ability to move, or be moved, freely and easily. People with disabilities face several different mobility barriers in downtown Madison. While some barriers seem common to anyone, with or without a disability, the barriers described in this report are unique to the disability community. For example, survey respondents noted a lack of accessible parking. A lack of parking is common for anyone who wishes to enjoy downtown Madison. However, additional barriers exist, such as a lack of accessible parking, parking spaces/ramps that are close enough to the destination, and ramps that provide accessible features such as a working elevator, or ticket/payment equipment. Paths of travel, specifically sidewalks that are free from holes, cracks, and unevenness, were identified as top barriers. Snow and ice, even in small amounts, create barriers for users of mobility devices, rendering the user unable to get to their destination, or to rely on unsafe alternate paths, such as city streets. Curb ramps full of snow due to street plows, or a lack of clearing by those responsible, creates barriers. Finally, crosswalk signaling is problematic when not audible, or when the signals change too quickly for pedestrians with disabilities to get from one side to the other.

Have you experienced mobility barriers in downtown Madison?



Do you avoid downtown Madison because of mobility barriers?



Biggest Mobility Barriers

1. Lack of Accessible Parking
 2. Snow/Ice clearing deficiencies
 3. Broken/deteriorating sidewalks
 4. Crosswalk signals were too fast
 5. Sightlines for drivers makes crossing dangerous
-

Top Comments

"I avoid trips to **downtown** as **parking is difficult to find for people with a disability**. Unfortunately attending Badger games is impossible due to parking too far from the building as walking is difficult on uneven surfaces. **Limited handicapped parking and unclear policies** make us reluctant to go downtown."

"Because of limited mobility **I'm unable to reach the ticket button and grab the ticket for parking ramps**. Because of this issue **I seek out street parking** but due to limited function in my hands, **the credit card parking pay stations are also difficult**. Would be better if they had chip readers."

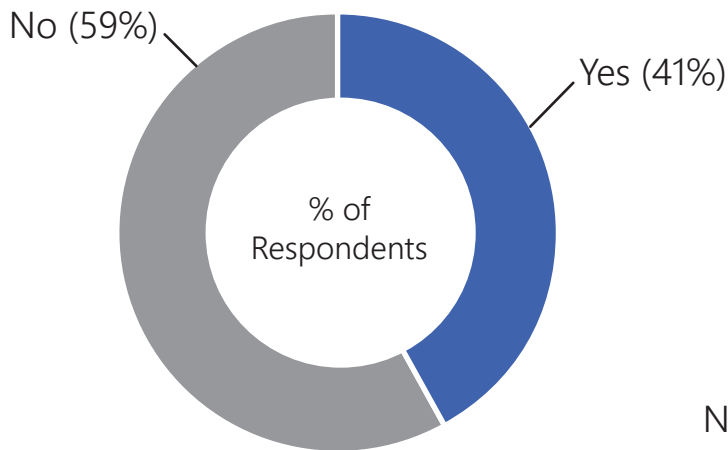
"I would love for downtown madison and madison in general to have **audible pedestrian signals in busy intersections** or places with heavy traffic. **I have found myself struggling to cross safely** because people don't stop to see me or my cane. As a blind person, this concerns me."

"It's **difficult for people in wheel chairs to navigate the busy sidewalks** of downtown - also I've noticed **cross walk signals don't last long enough** for individuals to successfully get across the street in time."

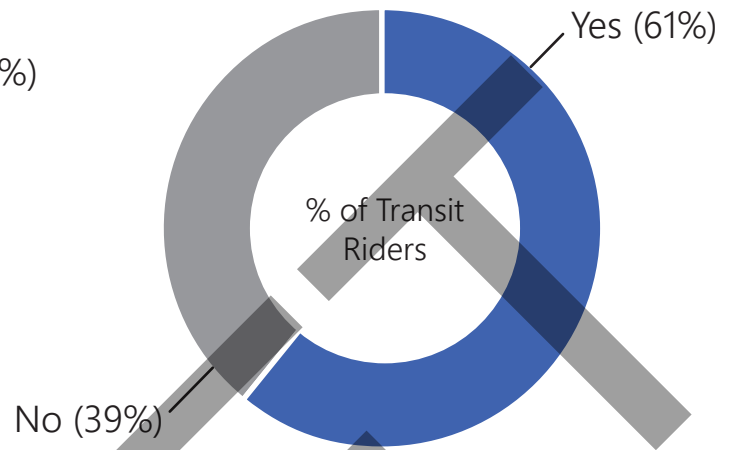


While a majority of respondents felt that there were adequate public transportation services that go into downtown, it was clear that barriers still exist to accessing those services. The number one barrier was related to inadequate bus shelter structures. Shelters that lack accessible maps, such as maps that are audible for riders with vision disabilities, or audio communication when buses arrive/depart, was a top barrier. Additionally, shelters may have physical accessibility issues related to the path of travel to and from the shelter and the bus, or adjacent sidewalk. A final note on bus access is the ability for riders on the bus to know when their stops are approaching, and the ability to use the signaling device on the bus to alert the driver to stop. Bike sharing was listed as one of the top services used, so it is important to evaluate the accessibility of bike sharing equipment, as well as the accessibility of the payment stations.

Do you use public transportation to access downtown Madison?



Are there adequate public transportation services that go into downtown Madison



Top Barriers

1. Shelter infrastructure is inadequate
2. Lack of accessible parking
3. No audio communication services at bus shelter
4. Transportation option is cost-prohibitive
5. Physical barrier to accessing service

Top Services

1. Public Buses
2. Taxis
3. Uber/Lyft (Ride-sharing apps)
4. Para-transit
5. B-cycle (Bike share)

Top Comments

"Need more low cost transportation options other than buses. Ride share can never be spontaneous, you always need to schedule in advance."

"It would be amazing if we had more options of transportation in Madison. While uber/lyft are wonderful they can be expensive at times. And some buses don't run on weekends which makes getting to downtown hard..."

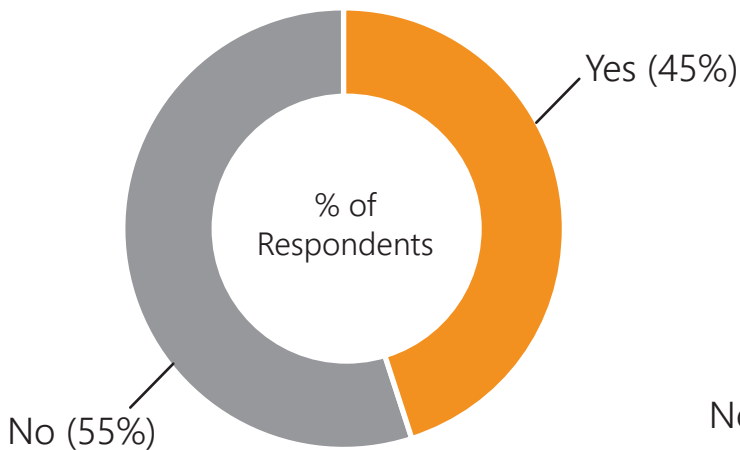
"We've had issues with buses taking time to stop and let someone with a wheelchair off - it's hard to signal when someone in a wheelchair needs to get off the bus (unless the bus driver knows them and understands their route every day)."

"On game day/special event days, parking costs are higher and limited. If you are going on bus, you almost never can make your transfer time or point, if you can get on the bus at all."

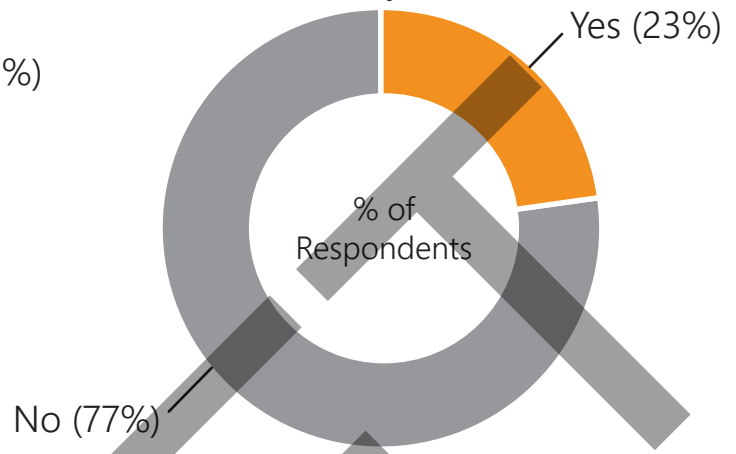


What should be an immediate alarm is that nearly half of all respondents have experienced barriers to accessing a private business for goods and services, and nearly 25% of respondents avoid downtown businesses due to barriers. Nearly 30 years after the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), people with disabilities continue to have their rights violated. From an economic standpoint, private businesses are missing, or have lost, customers. The number one concern was the entrance/exit of a business, including the lack of a door opening device. While openers are not required under the ADA, entry/exit doors can be difficult to open due to the weight of the door, spring weights that are not set properly, pressure from outside conditions, or indoor HVAC systems. A lack of proper approach for the location of the door, steps, and door thresholds over a half-inch also creates barriers. Getting into a business is a significant barrier, but as respondents identified, inaccessible circulation is also problematic. This can be caused by a lack of space between aisles, or clutter such as a display, a lack of space to access a service counter, as well as an inaccessible service counter, and circulation that is impeded by items such as tables or chairs. Other significant concerns related to accessing private businesses includes the lack of an elevator or lift to get to another level, or get in at all, and no accessible restrooms. Some restrooms may have adequate clear floor space, but toilets, sinks, towel/soap dispensers, and hand driers may be inaccessible due to location, or obstacles such as garbage cans.

Have you experienced any barriers to accessing a private business in downtown Madison?



Do you avoid downtown Madison businesses because of any known accessibility barriers?



Top Barriers

1. Entrance/Exit lacked a door opening button
2. Lack of accessible parking
3. Layout/circulation areas are inaccessible
4. No elevator or lift inside location
5. No accessible restrooms

Top places to experience barriers

1. Retail store
2. Restaurant/bar
3. Coffee shop
4. Movie theater/Concert venue
5. Grocery

Top Comments

"Many [businesses] seem to do the **bare minimum in order to be in compliance.**"

"Getting through **doorways can be tough without a switch** or when narrow passageways are crowded either with people or furniture/displays. Even with parking, **there is not always a place to wait for a table** available so we find a visit in non-rush hours because I cannot stand for long times. **Heavy doors are difficult to hold and pass through.**"

"...interior doorways are inaccessible, as are restrooms."

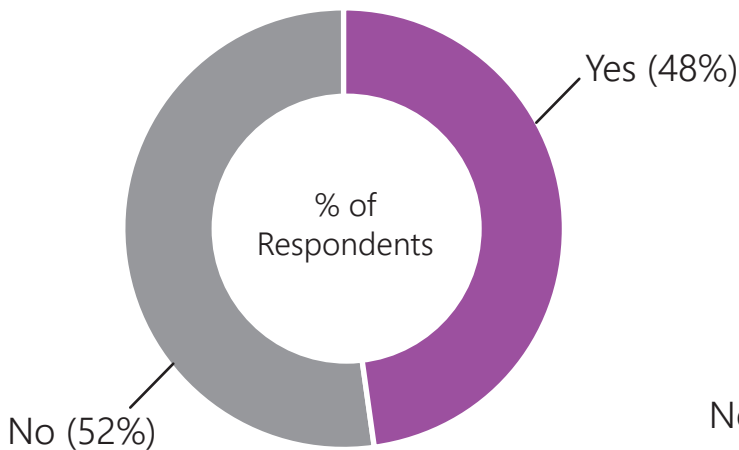
"In regard to the signage issue, **if the shop signage is small** or the street address number is small or obscured, **I have difficulty finding a business.** Additionally, poorly marked steps or steps without a rail are frightening."



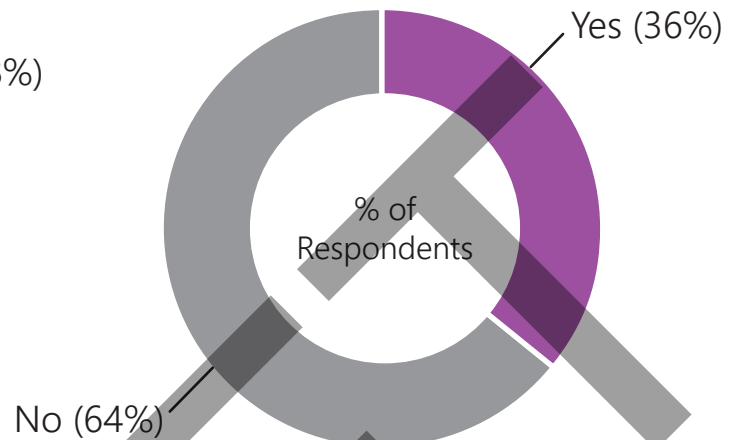
Community Events

Nearly half of respondents experienced barriers to community events, and nearly one-third avoid community events in downtown Madison. Inaccessibility keeps too many people with disabilities from enjoying one of the best parts of the downtown, and this too should be cause for alarm. In addition to the parking issues described earlier in this report, a lack of seating, or seating that is not conducive to equally enjoying an event, ranked as a common barrier. Community festivals and celebrations, and the farmers market, for example, have limited seating for those with mobility disabilities, or those with chronic conditions that require frequent rest. Further, seating may be natural landscaping, curbs, or elevated landscapes and platforms that are inherently inaccessible. Inaccessible entrances to venues, indoors and outdoors, was another top barrier, as was a lack of accessible restrooms and porta-johns. The location of restrooms within a venue or site can create barriers when distance, path of travel surfaces, and crowd circulation are inaccessible. Audio was a top barrier, and this is important for those with both vision and hearing related disabilities. Smaller events may not even utilize audio systems, which creates barriers. Finally, one respondent noted that sign language interpreters are rarely at community events. Event promotion to communities, as well as the practice of promoting and providing accommodations, and the cost associated, contributes to this barrier.

Have you experienced any barriers to accessing community events in downtown Madison?



Do you avoid community events in downtown Madison because of any known barriers?



Top Barriers

1. Lack of accessible parking
2. Lack of seating/benches (poor sightlines)
3. No accessible restrooms/porta-johns
4. No accessible entrance
5. Audio issues

Top events to experience barriers

1. Community festival/celebration
2. Farmer's Market
3. Music event
4. Parade/march
5. Fundraiser such as a run/walk

Top Comments

"Most events don't have interpreters which I understand because they can be expensive especially to provide it and not have anyone show up to benefit from it. **If you do decide to have a sign language interpreter** at an event make sure you **reach out to the deaf community** and advertise that there will be a sign language interpreter there."

"[Community events] affect everything - parking, costs of parking, bus routes changes, seats on buses, traffic, lack of communication of changes to downtown."

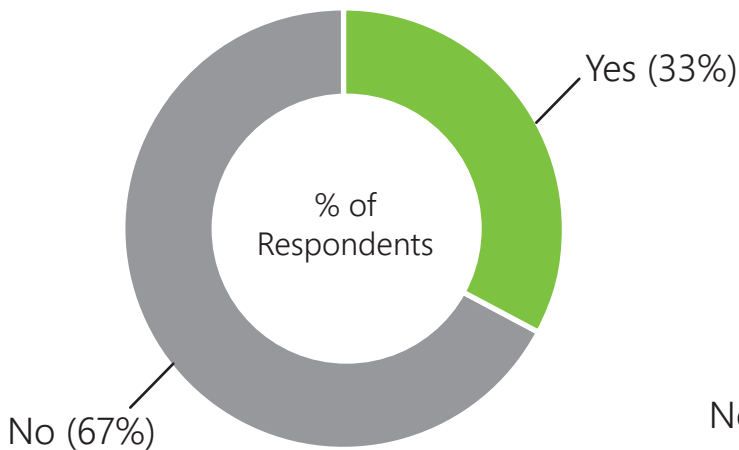
"Having events in grassy locations or on gravel such as Brat Fest is **difficult to maneuver in a wheelchair.**"

"Many businesses will not let people use restrooms [during community events] and if there are no other options for bathrooms this can be frustrating for someone with a digestive disorder."

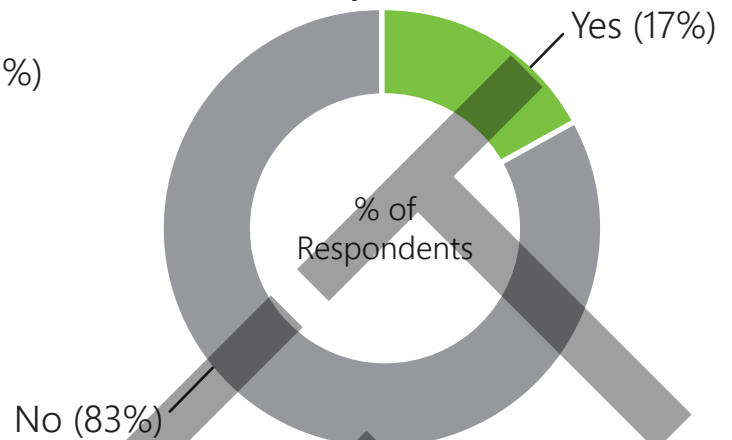


Open Spaces in downtown Madison have less barriers, according to survey responses. Only a third of respondents experienced barriers, and less than 20% avoid those open spaces. That said, there are still people with disabilities who are not able to equally enjoy public spaces, and the barriers are common to the previous sections. What is noteworthy is that four of the top five places where respondents have experienced barriers are city parks and green spaces that are free and open for community use. The most surprising outcome from the survey was that the majority of respondents that have experienced barriers, experienced those barriers at Breese Stevens Field. This location has become significant with the proposed upgrades to the facility, as well as the increased use of the facility. Comments were not provided about the specifics of Breese Stevens, but the top barriers should be evaluated there.

Have you experienced any barriers to accessing parks or open spaces in downtown Madison?



Do you avoid parks and open spaces in downtown Madison because of any known barriers?



Top Barriers

1. Lack of accessible parking
2. Inaccessible path of travel in the park
3. Lack of seating or benches
4. No accessible restrooms/porta-johns
5. No accessible entrance

Top places to experience barriers

1. Breese Stevens Field
2. Green spaces at the end of select streets (Blount Street, etc.)
3. James Madison Park
4. Vilas Park
5. Brittingham Park

Top Comments

"Designing parks so people with mobility challenges can access them takes someone with the eye for detail for walkways, lighting, and accessible swings and other devices. Too often a nice playground has incorrect heights for swings (so an individual cannot set down by themselves without being lifted up). Or a slide does not have a ramp or large enough platform on top to turn and sit down on."

"Parking [spaces] are hard to get into, even parking nearby can seem really far away if you have a mobility concern."

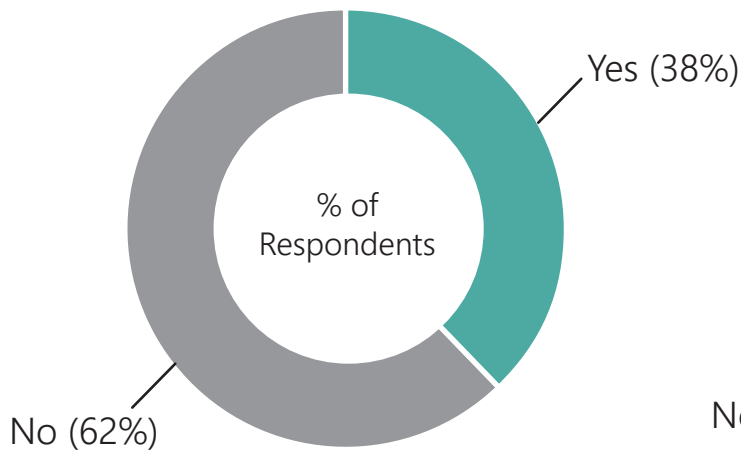
"We tend to go to the same place that we know how to get around and where bathrooms are located. Having a boardwalk makes many parks accessible where they would not otherwise be. Having a playground with a smooth surface like at Brittingham Park is great. Thank you for the handicapped swing at Brittingham park. We look for them everywhere as accessible parks features are limited."



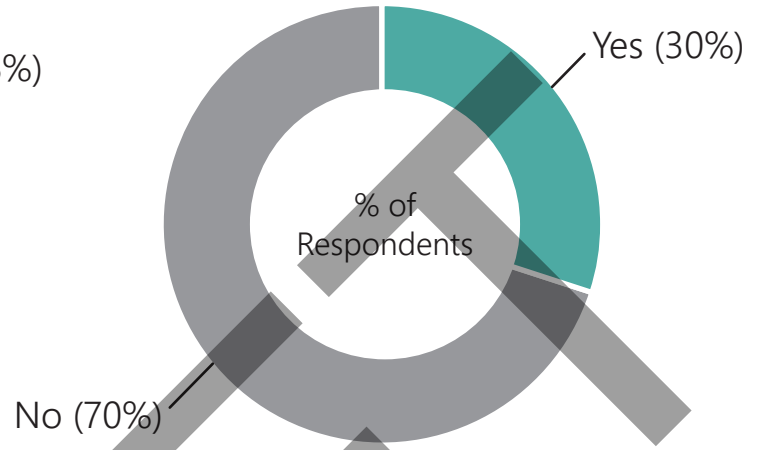
Semi-Public Spaces

This aspect of downtown Madison involves locations that are related, adjacent, or part of other parks, open spaces, or facilities. These locations are significant for the opportunities they provide, but were not specific to other categories in the survey. The top barriers identified in previous sections were evident here. Semi-public spaces where nearly 40% of respondents have experienced barriers include city, state, and university-owned properties. There are also multiple amenities, features, and facilities at each of these locations, so some of the top barriers may be isolated, or widespread.

Have you experienced any barriers to accessing public spaces or semi-public spaces in downtown Madison?



Do you avoid public spaces or semi-public spaces in downtown Madison because of any known barriers?



Top Barriers

1. Lack of accessible parking
2. Lack of seating or benches
3. Facilities are not accessible
4. No accessible entrance
5. No accessible restrooms

Top places to experience barriers

1. State Street
2. Memorial Union Terrace
3. Capitol Lawn
4. Overture Center
5. Monona Terrace

Top Comments

"[Many spaces have] **encroachment onto sidewalks.**"

"[**There are**] **limited handicapped bathroom facilities** or ones that are inadequate for changing briefs. No handrails."

"**Sign boards on State Street block [access]** with a wheelchair."

"Getting to the downtown spaces for **parking is a challenge.**"

"[Some problems include] poor lighting, poor contrast on flooring, unmarked steps, and **a lack of larger print signage.**"