

# City of Madison Disability Summit: Collective Visioning for a More Equitable Future Resident Feedback Summary

## Introduction

The City of *Madison Disability Summit: Collective Visioning for a More Equitable Future* was held on July 27<sup>th</sup> and July 28<sup>th</sup>. The event established a platform for residents to provide input for the development of a plan for the City of Madison. The plan will direct the work of the Department of Civil Rights – Division of Equity and Social Justice, Disability Rights, and Services Program to ensure all City programs include the voices and needs of the disability community. The plan will guide City processes and inform our work in the immediate future and in the coming years.

The objective of the Disability Summit was to obtain resident-informed input about these three major components of the City plan:

1. Priorities of the disability community,
2. Decision-making principles for the City that ensure people with disabilities can participate in and inform processes,
3. Ways to better connect diverse Disabled residents with City staff, policy makers, and each other.

This feedback was obtained via breakout room discussions at the summit, in-person feedback from the Disability Pride Madison Festival and correspondence shared with the Disability Rights and Services Specialist. Some of the information is summarized for brevity and other information is provided as direct quotes from residents.

## Intersectional Disability Communities & Disability Identities

### Deaf and Hard of Hearing

- The Deaf and Hard of Hearing community should not be an afterthought. When planning public events – the City waits to see if there needs to be an interpreter but the Deaf community wants to see that it's there not have to ask. We want to feel that we are completely included.
- Younger Deaf/Hard of Hearing people want their own social activities rather than ones that planned for adults.

### BIPOC

- The City needs to center race in all of its plans and initiatives
- Being really intentionally inclusive
- “Talking is one thing, doing is another”

### Chinese

- Cannot participate in government without language access
- No language access in government buildings so people do not go.
- Correspondence – bills, medical, come in English.
- Clinic and medical services do not provide interpreter services, which makes access to medical services difficult. It takes many visits to get what we need. We want interpreters and translators at the clinic so there can be dialog. They only have cell phones available – text translations are not accurate and cause miscommunication and misunderstanding.

### Hmong

- Divide between the elders and younger generations because the elders do not speak English and they do not read Hmong.
- Stigma within the Hmong community related to disability.
- Hmong families traditionally are large and there is a sense that some landlords retaliate because of this.

### LGBTQIA+

- Individuals who work with the city are not necessarily living up to the City's values. Some approaches are paternalistic and harmful to people of color, queer, and disabled people.
- Lack of intersectionality/inclusion
- In-home care and respite care workers - For the queer community, the worker shortage creates another layer of concern. For example working with transition care, it is already a vulnerable topic, and there are low options culturally competent and respectful providers.

### Mental Health

- "I wish the City knew how hard it is to get and use accommodations and how hard it is to navigate without accommodations."
- Stigma related to non-apparent disabilities
- Stigma related to mental health needs
- People with mental health disabilities experience disparities in access to care and housing
- Need connection to mental health and disability community
- Everyone's mental health needs are different.

### Parents and Allies

- Parents need to be in a situation that continue to substitute their own decisions for the agency of the individual with a disability
- Transition from K-12 to adulthood is difficult

## Engagement

### Where to connect

- More events like the Disability Summit
- Regular meetups and community meetings
- Collaborate and connect with community based organizations, community centers, social workers, and social groups.
- “Traveling through Madison is the best way to learn the city- by bus or by wandering, go into neighborhoods, interact with people, learn what is going on and who has unmet needs.”
- Collaboration with schools. “You get to parents through the schools. If that does not change, I do not see a way the City can meaningfully engage.”

### Planning engagement activities

- Include people with disabilities in event planning and planning for public engagement. Compensate them for their time and expertise.
- Hold virtual and hybrid meetings and social events
- Use of preparation materials in accessible formats, for example a QR code, an audio recording, plain text
- Holding events and meetings in accessible locations
- Holding events and meetings near public transportation and at hours when public transportation is available
- Providing childcare and supporting caregivers to attend meetings
- Providing transportation to meetings
- Making information about accommodation requests available early
- Making the accommodations request process easier to use

### Communication & Information Sharing

- Plain language
- Language Access (without having to request it)
- Alders need to be more responsive to residents with disabilities.
- Accessible communications, including computer systems and website.
- Develop a mechanism for Boards, Commissions, and Committees to better communicate with the public about their agenda (i.e. list serves). It is impossible to know what topics are being discussed where and how to get information in time. “Too many silos and difficult to navigate.”
- Communicating programs and services multiple ways and through multiple channels.

### Inclusion

- Greater use of gender natural language
- Greater use of identity affirming language for the disability community
- We need to learn how to nurture each other (without infantilizing).
- Trauma informed customer services for all city staff.

- Culture shift to remove pressure to mask our disabilities
- More awareness and training about mental health/mental illness/psych disabilities.

### Reciprocity & Transparency

- Hosting teaching/connecting events that are dedicated to bridging differences

### Representation

- “Greater staff diversity - What is ‘The city’ except for the people who work for the city?”
- Representation of disabled people and people with mental health needs on many Boards, Commissions, and Committees, not just in disability spaces.
- Hire Disabled consultants and pay them for their expertise and labor.

## Decision Making

- “To City officials: You serve us. The city works because we do! Listen to our voices and meet our needs!”
- Consideration of intersectionality of disability and sustainability
- Intersectionality of disability and socioeconomic issues
- Accountability
- Transparency
- “Having our voices in those spaces and being heard in those spaces”
- “Meeting people’s basic needs - bare minimum for a city/government, housing is mental health care! Food security is mental health care!”
- “Demonstrating with your dollars that something is of value when people are brought on as consultants.”
- Access is safety.
- “Government should be getting people together; they don't necessarily need to do the work.”
- Committees, Commissions and Boards linked to disability-related issues need to cross-communicate more.
- Access is needed to the community – amenities, transportation, shopping, etc.
- Surviving is not the same as thriving.
- “We are limited so much by systems. Resources are limited. How much can we tread beyond litigation? What can we do outside of government resources and power? How can we get people involved helping each other?”
- Policy, programs, and services should be empowering.
- Everyone should have an equal opportunity to feel like they are part of a community

## Priorities

### Language Access Services & Plan Implementation

- Interpretation and Language Access Program services should be provided whenever there is an emergency
- Madison needs to better understand the needs and challenges of interpretation service providers.
- People do not go to meetings or places where language access is not readily and consistently available.

### COVID-19

- Mask-mirroring by City staff (i.e. if someone is wearing a mask, put on a mask)
- Concerns about COVID-19 pandemic not being over and rollback of protective practices.

### City Facilities

- Review existing facilities for functional accessibility and ADA compliance
- New construction must be fully accessible and should incorporate inclusive design
- Better signage that directs people to gender-inclusive, wheelchair-accessible restrooms.
- Accessible and non-gendered bathrooms and facilities (i.e. city shelters for the unhoused are gendered)
- Indoor Air Quality –
  - Fragrance-free policies that include cleaning products and scented personal products
  - Consideration of chemical sensitivities with regards to building materials
  - Air filtration systems

### Child Care

- More city-funded childcare options. Low options disproportionately affect the disabled children
- Funding assistance with 1:1 aids so children with disabilities can attend public programs. The cost of a 1:1 can price families out of childcare and lead to less integrated settings for children with disabilities or cause parents to leave the workforce.
- Social emotional learning/teaching kids developmentally appropriate emotional skills in City programs.

### Medical Services & Community Clinics

- Hospitals and Clinics should have skilled ASL and language interpreters available 24/7
- Training for hospital/medical staff about autism and neurodiversity provided by Autistic and neurodivergent people.

- Training and resources for people with disabilities regarding Medicare, Medicaid, BadgerCare and other public resources for healthcare
- Consideration of the ways faith-based healthcare services affect low-income people with disabilities.

### Parks & Recreation

- Accessible green space and community gardens designed and using existing research on space design and friendly to people and the planet, edible plants to support food access.
- Better communication and resource sharing about accessible amenities

### Direct Care/Home Healthcare

- Supporting caregivers, care giving leave, etc.
- Local interventions to address home healthcare crisis
- Family caregiver tax credits.
- Examine and address inequities in care for LGBTQIA+ and BIPOC communities.

### Streets

- The city becomes inaccessible in the winter. Snow plowing by the city is insufficient.
- Greater enforcement of ordinances related snow clearance by residents and businesses.
- Construction zones must include a safe and accessible path of travel.
- Prioritize repair of sidewalks and curb cuts in areas with high pedestrian traffic like the Square, the Overture Center, State Street, and the Capitol Square.
- Greater enforcement of unauthorized/illegal use of accessible parking spaces.

### Transportation

- “Waiting and worrying about your transportation takes a lot of life energy and time that you could be doing something else – and can impact other obligations like employment or just things you’d like to do – real quality of life impacts.”
- Transportation opportunities should be commiserate throughout the city.
- “Increasing transportation options for people with disabilities would help level the playing field for people throughout the region and be a positive for all the communities.”
- Better communication about how and where to file complaints and who to contact about accessibility issues is needed.
- Neutral Party to resolve complaints – Metro should not investigate itself.

### Pedestrians

- Automated and audio walk signals
- More consideration of access needs and traffic enforcement at busy or large intersections.

- Intersections with more than two streets are problematic and poor design for people with disabilities.
- People with disabilities need to feel safe to travel in their community.

### Drivers

- Gas stations where attendants would serve people in wheelchairs so they do not have to get in/out of vehicle. This is not consistent throughout the Madison area.

### Busses

- People who have been negatively impacted by the Metro Redesign need more and better options than paratransit. There are strong feelings that people have lost independence, access to their community and are having to fund other services out-of-pocket to meet their needs. Many feel left behind by the City.
- Every aspect of transportation must be considered in design and planning – path of travel and distance to stops, stops, busses, routes, behavior of drivers, route planning tools, information about schedules, etc.
- Public transportation should provide access to move throughout all the communities in our region and not just some.
- “Freedom to get to where I need to go with the same ease as someone who can travel with a car, not requiring so much advance planning and not so many back up plans, equity would be not having to do so much problem solving to simply do every day items.”
- Accessibility features need to be consistent on all busses and routes.

### Paratransit

- Paratransit is not an equitable alternative to the bus, “it feels like segregation.”
- System needs a re-design that is informed by people with disabilities. Concerns include:
  - Lack of public knowledge – there are more people are eligible than are aware of their eligibility–some people think it has an income based requirement
  - Continue with COVID practices for presumptive eligibility, phone and Zoom instead of in-person appointments.
  - Having to schedule paratransit a day ahead is very limiting
  - No options in an emergency or to obtain a same-day ride
  - When an appointment runs late, there is fear of missing a ride
  - Large scheduling window means people spend a long time waiting and it doesn’t feel equitable
  - “Scheduling rides is a big challenge (not the process) but figuring out the timing of trips when scheduling and need to add in extra time; over 50 dr visits you are worrying a lot about missing your ride or just spending a lot of time unnecessarily.”
  - Option for online scheduling
  - Option to check/review scheduled rides online
  - Need a paratransit trip tracker similar to the transit tracker apps
- Positives:

- Door to door service really helps residents and should remain
- “Positive experience with drivers and find them to be quite helpful and appreciate that they are looking out for users.”

### Public Accommodations

- Greater outreach to and support for businesses to access grants and loan programs aimed toward ADA compliance and inclusive design.
- The burden to enforce the ADA should not rest on people with disabilities having the time, knowledge, and resources to initiate complaints.
- “It is important for people with disabilities to not feel isolated in their home and feel like they cannot leave because they cannot access what is around them.”
- Better communication and resource sharing about accessible amenities

### Employment

- Training and resources to support people who receive public benefits to understand their options to enter or reenter the workforce.
- Training and support for employers around inclusive workplaces, accommodations, and DEIA practices.

### Emergency Services

- CARES crisis response team is a fabulous initiative – would like to see peer-paraprofessionals, EMS incorporated and funding/services through Fire and sources other than Police.
- Training for police about Autism provided by Autistic people.
- More options for emergency services that do not require people with disabilities to have to engage with law enforcement.

### Housing

- Currently Madison’s homeless shelters are gendered. We need gender inclusive and family options.
- Universal design
- Integrated accessible housing as a requirement for all new development
- Accessible housing near transportation
- Mechanisms to ensure accessible units are rented to people who need them.
- Penalties/incentives related to preserving accessible features when remodeling or renovating.
- Accessible amenities and new buildings even
- Supports and resources for developers to “Hire people with disabilities for consulting roles, we have the experience!”

### Other

- Work with advocacy organizations to support efforts to bring ABLE accounts to Wisconsin.