



Hyde Park Disabilities Task Force

“Walk and Roll”

Sidewalk Survey of 55th Street,
from the Lakefront to Ellis Avenue

Final Report
7/12/2012

Task Force Members:

Hyde Park-Kenwood Community
Conference
4th Ward Office, City of Chicago
5th Ward Office, City of Chicago
Coalition for Equitable Community
Development
Older Women's League

and

DARE
Disabled Adult Residential Enterprises

Hyde Park Disabilities Task Force

“Walk and Roll” on 55th Street

Executive Summary

On Saturday, June 16, 2012, 25 volunteers from the Hyde Park Disabilities Task Force—including 8 residents of the Disabled Adult Residential Enterprise (DARE) building on 55th Street—conducted a survey of 55th Street from the lake front to Woodlawn Avenue. This street was chosen because of the large number of differently-abled people who use it for shopping, banking, accessing public transportation, and reaching the University of Chicago Medical Center.

Guided by the “ADA Accessibility Survey Instructions,” four teams canvassed the north and south sides of 55th Street, starting from Lake Park (at the Metra station) and working in groups east and west. Each team had maps, a dedicated note taker, cameras, tape measures, and other tools for gauging areas of concern.

The four groups identified numerous problems. A few were serious enough to require wheelchair participants to roll in the street to circumnavigate the difficulty. The following report details problems encountered by each team, with photographs of more serious issues.

Certain problems quickly rose to the top of the list, and should receive attention if at all possible. Some are very minor, such as trimming tree branches between University and Ellis, or replacing worn and cracked curb mats (orange domed warning mats at curb ramps, such as the ones at Woodlawn, which are disintegrating).

The four most troubling problems, as identified by the wheelchair and white-cane participants, include these locations:

- *Bus shelter on Hyde Park Blvd at 55th (going north).* The shelter is positioned so that wheelchairs must go into the dirt when boarding a bus. The concrete pad could be easily extended.
- *The closed-off alley/driveway intersecting the sidewalk at 55th near Dorchester (south side of street).* This closed-off area is a nightmare of bad angles, brick pavers, and narrow access, which forced one wheelchair user into the street.
- *Intersection 55th and Dorchester (north side of street).* The sidewalk and curb pavement on this corner is badly cracked and angled, and there are no curb mats or truncated domes.
- *No curb ramps at all.* There are no curb cuts or access ramps along the south side of University Park (between Blackstone and Dorchester), nor are there curb ramps along the south side (entrance) to the Lutheran School of Theology between University and Greenwood. These are both problematic, as there *are* ramps on the opposite sides of the street, which if an unknowing person were to use in a wheelchair, they would be stranded in the middle of the road.

Hyde Park Disabilities Task Force

“Walk and Roll” on 55th Street

Final Report

In spring, 2012, the City of Chicago announced plans to reconfigure 55th Street in Hyde Park, between Cottage Grove Avenue and Lake Park Avenue, to make it more amenable to bicycle use. The Hyde Park Disabilities Task Force saw this as an opening to evaluate concerns about the accessibility and safety of 55th Street in terms of people with white canes, service animals, and wheelchairs. This is a special concern in Hyde Park because of the Disabled Adult Residential Enterprises housing on 55th between Lake Park and Cornell, where disabled residents have had serious problems with bicyclists using the sidewalk and running into wheelchairs and service dogs.

About the Hyde Park Disabilities Task Force

The Task Force was formed in 2006 in response to problems encountered by Karen Robinson, when she attempted to enter Dunkin’ Donuts with her service dog Hampton. She was refused entry and was forced to leave. This happened on more than one occasion, and was repeated at the MacDonald’s on 52nd and Lake Park.

Members of the community were shocked and surprised to find such a degree of ignorance of ADA law, so the community formed an ad hoc group to address the immediate problem by educating the neighborhood business owners about their responsibilities under ADA (through door-to-door visits by two-partner teams (one disabled, one not), who visited all neighborhood businesses on 51st, 53rd, 55th, and 57th Streets).

As a result of this initial effort, a group was formed under the auspices of the Hyde Park-Kenwood Community Conference (a neighborhood watchdog group, with close relations to many other neighborhood entities), with sponsorship by Alderman Leslie Hairston (5th Ward), then-alderman Toni Preckwinkle (4th Ward), the Hyde Park Chamber of Commerce (with then-executive director Lenora Austin), and residents of the Disabled Adult Residential Enterprises (DARE, a nonprofit community organization offering accessible apartments for adults with disabilities).

Currently, the Task Force organizational contacts are:

- Chair: George Rumsey, President, Coalition for Equitable Community Development, and former president of HPKCC
- Jane Ciacchi, President, Hyde Park-Kenwood Community Conference
- Brenda Sawyer, Vice-President, Hyde Park-Kenwood Community Conference
- Sue Purrington, 5th Ward
- Charis Tripplett, 4th Ward
- Allison Hartman, Chairman of the Board, DARE
- Daisy Gressel, DARE
- Karen Robinson, DARE
- Carolyn Rhodes, DARE
- Marcia Trawinski, Hyde Park Older Women’s League

Concerns and Problems

At bimonthly meetings, the Board of Directors of DARE routinely asks residents to report any problems they may encounter with accessibility around the neighborhood. At several meetings, residents reported major difficulties with bus shelters (such as the one on Hyde Park Blvd. at 55th, northbound, where there is a serious problem with getting wheelchairs onto bus lift ramps), bad curbs (such as 55th and Dorchester), cracked and broken curb ramps (such as 55th and Woodlawn), badly cracked and uneven sidewalks, and parkways that had uncovered tree wells and deteriorated planters that were hazardous to pedestrians in general (and particularly to white-cane users).

In an attempt to systematically define and prioritize the problems raised by the DARE residents, the Disabilities Task Force decided to do a “Walk and Roll,” a volunteer sidewalk inspection of 55th Street that would enlist people in wheelchairs, people with white canes and service animals, and local neighbors to document the problems.

Guidelines

On Saturday, June 16, at 9:30 am, 25 volunteers gathered at the DARE residence parking lot to prepare for the survey of 55th Street (see Appendix A for list of participants), from the lake front to Woodlawn Avenue. This stretch of 55th Street is the most heavily used by DARE residents and other individuals with disabilities in the neighborhood, because it is the site of the area’s largest grocery store, drugstore, and two banks; it leads to several schools; it has major CTA and Metra connections; and it provides the most direct access to the University of Chicago Medical Centers.

Volunteers were separated into four teams:

Team 1	Team 2	Team 3	Team 4
Northside of 55th Street from Lake Park to the Lakefront	Southside of 55th Street from Lake Park to the LakeFront	Southside of 55th Street from Lake Park to Woodlawn Avenue	Northside of 55th Street from Lake Park to Woodlawn Avenue
Leader: Jane Ciacci	Leader: Brenda Sawyer	Leader: Allison Hartman	Leader: George Rumsey
Gary Ossewaarde Daisy Gressel* Karen Robinson*	Lois Anderson Gail Eisenberg Joy Clendenning Martha Scott Barbara Smith*	Karen Boyd* Kayla Boyd* Amy Becker Michael Reed David Shapiro	Anita Hollins Camille Hamilton-Doyle Stephanie Franklin Greg Papesch

* DARE resident

Each member was equipped with street maps of the area to be surveyed, for marking problems on the map and making notes. Each team was also equipped with at least one person to make photographs and one person with a tape measure. All participants were given the “ADA Accessibility Survey Instructions” for curb ramps (from the ADA website, <http://www.ada.gov/pcatoolkit/app1curbramps.pdf>), along with a one-sheet set of “important questions to examine” (see Appendix B); the instruments were reviewed with the group-at-large before the survey began.

Findings

General observations:

All four teams reported serious areas of uneven sidewalks (1 to 2 inches out of alignment). Many tree-well grates were missing. Newspaper and magazine distribution boxes tended to be unanchored, often tilted at dangerous angles, or even sitting on the curb ramps. Several locations had street signs that were too low (a tall person would walk in to them), and hanging branches created a problem west of the viaduct.

Team 1: Report for the north side of 55th Street going east

1. The Lake Park-right turn configuration and its sight lines causes accidents. The 55th Street crosswalk (under the viaduct at Lake Park) is unmarked and unsignaled; it is unsafe and should have a "Do Not Cross" sign. The audible crossing guides on the northeast corner of 55th and Lake Park were not working on the day of the survey.
2. Under the viaduct, several overhead lights were burned out or not lit.
3. Between the viaduct and Cornell, several tree well grates are missing, with soil levels at least 2 inches below the sidewalk, and the last tree well before Cornell has no grate and a sharp piece of protruding metal.



Missing tree grates and uneven surface levels



Major sidewalk decay on Cornell

4. East of Cornell, the third tree well has a lifted grate, which presents a tripping hazard.
5. Sign post west of the pay machine is loose.
6. Two bike racks interfere with pedestrian traffic, and could be moved closer to the curb so that bikes do not protrude into the sidewalk.

7. Curbs and shelter placement create problems for bus access, particularly by the shelter west of Hyde Park Blvd. on 55th Street. The location of this bus shelter has created problems for the DARE participants. It technically leaves 36 inches of access, but when one DARE resident in a wheelchair tried to lead a second DARE resident with white cane through this part of the survey, it was impossible. (It took two passer-bys to help the gentleman below get on the bus; note the bus cannot be near the shelter.)



Awkward position of bus shelter at 55th and Lake Park, creates difficulties for persons in wheelchairs to board buses

8. The Mayfair building's standpipe connections make the sidewalk even narrower.
9. Pins from a missing street sign east of the bus shelter stick up an inch—they should be removed.
10. There were several concerns noted about the intersection of Hyde Park Blvd and 55th Street. At the northwest corner, the light pole base is raised enough that a person could get a shoe stuck. *None* of the crosswalks have warning mats or truncated domes. On the northeast corner, the bus stop has a "weird, undulating curb." None of the crosswalk curbs have warning mats or truncated domes, and this is one of the busiest intersections in the neighborhood.



Concrete pad does not extend far enough for wheelchairs to board bus



Stepped curb at bus stop, 55th and Hyde Park Blvd, no curb mats or truncated domes

11. Emergency safety phone 99 is obsolete, and the cover can swing in the wind into crosswalk.
12. All trees in the block from Hyde Park Blvd to Everett lack grates, and soil is below the sidewalk level. At the alley in this block, the slopes are too steep. The building beyond the alley has downward steps with rails (without safety marking) over the sidewalk opposite a bad tree well without grate—the walk is narrowed.
13. From Everett to South Shore, several metal and cement supports for meters should be leveled to the sidewalk (currently protrude 1 to 2 inches higher than the sidewalk). At the alley in this block, ramps are steep and uneven especially at the pavement, and there is a sunken gas shutoff cap.



Dangerous landscaping along parkways



Inappropriate position of safety phone

14. East of the alley the tree wells are empty; a couple pose trip hazards; one has a 3-inch cut-off stump. The sidewalk also has numerous gaps and cracks. Along the parkway in the block, brickwork between the main walk and the curb has sunken, creating a hazard.
15. UC emergency phone 103 protrudes into the sidewalk.
16. At South Shore Drive, the crosswalks are very bad on both sides with deteriorated warning mats; the east side esp. is at a 45 degree angle to the walk and street. The sidewalk east of South Shore has a hodgepodge of mismatching concrete and asphalt for a stretch. About 30 feet east of South Shore the sidewalk is on a steep uneven incline and humped at a large tree.



55th and South Shore, deteriorated mats



Tree roots create severe crack at entrance to park

Team 2: Report for the south side of 55th Street going east

1. At the west edge of the viaduct (by Kikuya's restaurant), the sidewalk at the alley has no warning mats, and where the alley crosses the sidewalk onto 55th Street, it is cracked and filled with holes.
2. The sidewalk between Cornell and Hyde Park Blvd. is badly uneven, with big cracks around manhole covers and missing segments of concrete.



Sidewalk at the viaduct, crossed by alley



Tree wells at 55th and Cornell

3. Tree wells in this same block are poorly fitted, missing, or protruding hazardously, creating a tripping hazard.
4. The curbs along the intersection at 55th and Hyde Park Blvd. are poorly finished, uneven at the pavement, and lack bump mats.
5. The curb before and after the alley running south by the Park Shore is badly angled and deteriorated.



Intersection, 55th and Hyde Park Blvd



Alley crossing sidewalk near South Shore Drive

6. The alley itself is badly pitted; this is important, since it is used to access the parking lots located behind these large buildings and must be crossed to get to the Point and the adjacent parking lot.
7. The road is badly holed and cracked around the manhole cover at the alley's entrance.
8. The ramps onto the street at South Shore and 55th have worn warning mats and poor configurations for crossing the street.

Team 3: Report for the south side of 55th Street going west

1. There is no block on the street where the sidewalk is even or level in height. It seems to be acceptable for new sidewalk to be up to 2 inches higher than the sidewalk it replaces. The DARE participant in Team 3 could get over these bumps with a motorized wheelchair, but worried that wheelchairs with smaller wheels could not do so.
2. At 55th and Harper, the crosswalks are poorly defined, and the ramps are unmarked, with no warning mats or domes/bumps. Where the mats are present, they tend to be worn and cracked.
3. The sidewalk between Harper and Blackstone has areas of severe and uneven cracking.



Intersection, 55th and Lake Park



Alley crossing sidewalk near Harper/Blackstone

4. University Park (the large condo association in the center of 55th Street) has *no curb cuts* on the south side of the building (north side of street). This is a serious problem because there are curb cuts on the south side of the street, which someone unfamiliar with the area might take as a shortcut, only to find he or she cannot access the sidewalk on the north side of the street.



No curb cuts alongside University Park's south border, between Harper and Kenwood

5. On 55th between Blackstone and Dorchester there is an old unusable driveway. It not on the same level as the rest of the sidewalk. Between that driveway and the corner (which has no mat) the sidewalk is slanted towards the street and very narrow. This is the most dangerous place on the whole street, in the opinion of the team's DARE participant, and the entire block should be re-examined in light of improving safety. In the East 1400s, Team 3's DARE participant was not able to pass, and had to backtrack and go into the street.



Closed-off driveway with bad slope, poor passage; rest of block is narrow with badly cracked sidewalk

6. There are no detectable warning mats at Dorchester and at Blackstone. The curb slopes in a haphazard way, and because there will be new traffic patterns with the bicycle and bus lanes, these corners become even more of a hazard.
7. There are badly worn warning mats at Woodlawn and at University. Mats are cracked, protruding, or the domes/bumps are so worn as to be useless.



55th and Dorchester, no warning mats, decayed curbs



Woodlawn, badly deteriorated warning mats, all 4 corners

Team 4: Report for the north side of 55th Street going west

1. The sidewalk on the south side of the Hyde Park Shopping Center is uneven, unmarked, missing warning mats, and presents a challenge (because at the curb it is stepped, not sloped) for anyone trying to get onto a bus.
2. There are large areas of very uneven sidewalks, particularly on the north side of 55th between Harper and Dorchester (2 blocks).
3. Most trees did not have grates, and the soil level was much lower than the sidewalk level.
4. There are no warning mats at 55th and Dorchester (both sides), and the transition from sidewalk to street is very uneven and ragged.



Harper crossing for Hyde Park Shopping Center, no warning mats or bumps



Uneven, ragged, curb at Dorchester, no domes or warning mats



Entrance to BankFinancial drive-thru, with poor slopes and crumbling pavement



Entrance to University Park, with ramp above curb that is extremely steep

5. Street signs in several locations seemed to be particularly low; the team's tallest member is only 5 ft 10", and the top of his head almost touched the bottom of some of the signage.
6. There are several unused newspaper vendor boxes that are not anchored. Some are lightweight and can easily be over-turned, such as the one at 55th and Dorchester.
7. The transition from sidewalk to the drive-through window of BankFinancial is poorly angled, very rough, and has protruding pipes and conduits.
8. The sidewalk between the drive-through and Kenwood is very narrow; removal of unused parking meters would open up a little more room. There are also several places in this block where water or gas mains are missing their caps or protruding from the sidewalk, as are remnants of parking meters.



Water, gas caps, parking meter stubs exposed or open, Woodlawn



Several light poles with exposed bases between Kenwood and Woodlawn

9. The ramp mat at the northeast corner of 55th and Kenwood protrudes from the sidewalk, creating a tripping hazard. The mats at this intersection also seem to be poorly placed or positioned (not aligned to the curb.)
10. Several light poles have exposed bases (which should be covered or capped), which creates a tripping hazard.
11. The sidewalk along the south edge of Nichols Park is too narrow to be safe. There are bus stops at both 55th/Kenwood and 55th/Kimbark (opposite ends of the same block), where people stand while waiting. This creates an impassible sidewalk, where the only choice is to go into the grass (as evidenced by how a footpath has been worn along 55th). There is sufficient room at the corner of 55th and Kenwood to build a bus shelter (without impacting the park), and the rest of the sidewalk could also be widened by 12 to 24 inches, without impacting the park (according to the chair of the Nichols Park Advisory Council, who joined this team).



Obstructed and awkward ramp at Starbucks



Curbs and mats that don't align with cross walk, Kimbark and again at University

12. The placement of the curb mats at 55th and Kimbark do not properly align with the crosswalk. Someone following the curb onto the street will end up in traffic.
13. The curb cuts and ramp mats at 55th and Woodlawn are in very poor condition: cracked, worn, and loose. The problem is made worse by newspaper vendor boxes that are positioned right on the corner (in front of Starbucks), on top of the curb ramps.
14. The sidewalk along Starbucks (leading to the Starbucks' accessibility ramp) is paved with brick, which has become badly uneven due to tree roots.
15. An unused pipe extends from the kidney dialysis center wall out to the sidewalk.



Narrow sidewalk from Dorchester to Kimbark, particularly along Nichols Park



Pipes that extend into the sidewalk, low-hanging trees, Woodlawn to Ellis

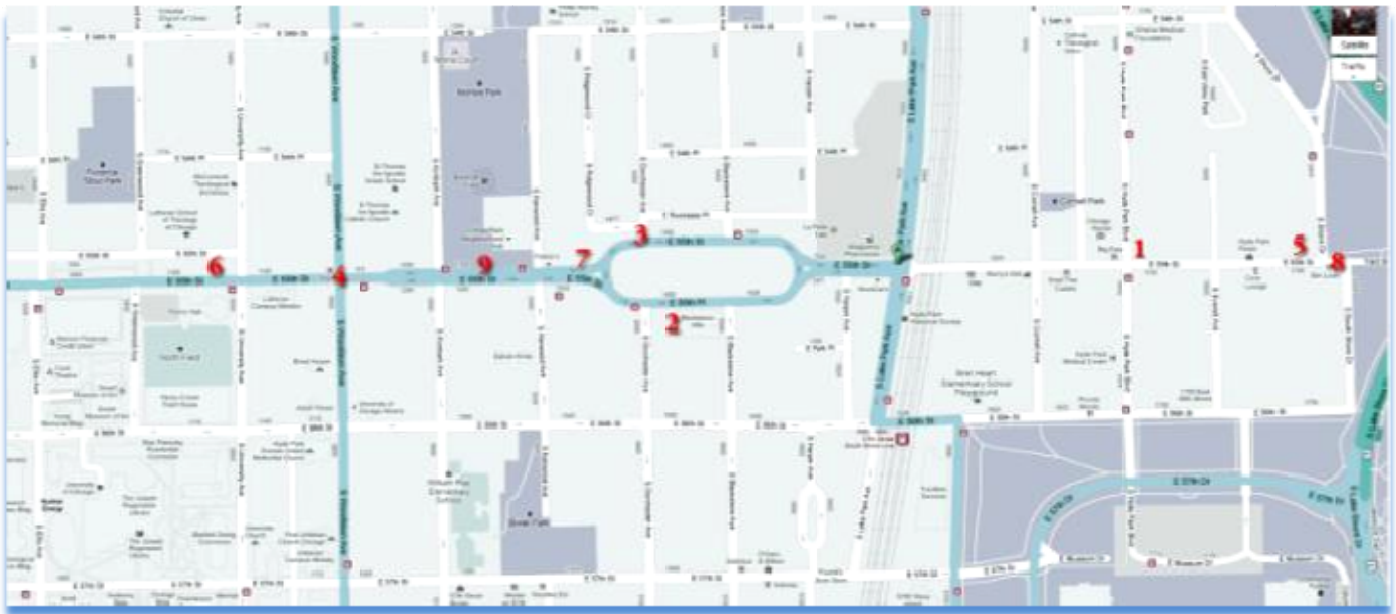
16. The sidewalk around the fire station is also very broken and uneven. The placement of the curb mats directs a pedestrian into traffic (not the crosswalk).
17. Between University and Ellis, there are exposed cables coming out of street lights, uncovered bases to street lights, very low hanging branches (only 3 feet off the ground), and uneven sidewalks.
18. At the berms in front of the Lutheran School, curb cuts lead into nonpedestrian crossings, with no curb cuts at all on the Lutheran School side of the street for getting back onto the sidewalk. If one crosses in a wheel chair, he or she must ride half a block down University to the trash pickup to get back on to the sidewalk.



No curbs cuts along the entire south side (entrance) of Lutheran School of Theology

9 Critical Areas That Will Make a Difference

1. Bus shelter on Hyde Park Blvd at 55th (going north)
2. Alley/driveway crossing on 55th near Dorchester (south side of street)
3. Intersection 55th and Dorchester (north side of street)
4. Low-hanging branches on 55th and curbs at Lutheran School (north side of street)
5. Parkways at 5490 (north side of street)
6. Intersection of 55th and Woodlawn (all 4 corners)
7. Entrance to BankFinancial drivethru (north side of street)
8. Intersection of 55th and South Shore Drive (all four corners)
9. Sidewalk and bus stops along Nichols Park



Afternote:

It would be extremely helpful to have “No Bicycle Riding on Sidewalk” signs posted east of the viaduct, between Lake Park and the lakefront, where the sidewalks are particularly narrow.

Appendix A

"Walk and Roll" Participants

First Name	Last Name	Address	Contact
Lois	Anderson	1616 E. 55th, #209	
Amy	Becker	5400 S. Hyde Park Blvd., #B2	amy.r.becker@gmail.com
Karen	Boyd	1616 E. 55th Street	
Jack	Childs	9840 S. Pulaski Rd	
Jane	Ciacchi	1534 East 59th St.	janeciacchi@aol.com
Joy	Clendenning	5213 S. Kenwood	773-667-6127
Mildred	Dixon	1616 East 55th	mdixon1950@gmail.com
Stephanie	Frankin	5453 S. Kenwood	
Daisy	Gressel	1616 East 55th St., #109	
Mrs.	Hall	1616 East 55th St	
Camille	Hamilton-Doyle	932 East 50th St	bigcliff47@hotmail.com
Allison	Hartman	5545 S. Woodlawn	773-324-5539
Anita	Hollins	4850 S. Lake Park	ladya007_2000@yahoo.com
Gail	Isenberg	1755 E. 55th, #703	gisenber@bsd.uchicago.edu
Gary	Ossewaarde	1765 E. 55th St, #B6	garyossewaarde@yahoo.com
Greg	Papesh	5050 S. East End Ave.	773-643-5804
Michael	Reed	1616 East 55th St	
Carolyn	Rhodes	1616 East 55th, #203	trinityconsults216@yahoo.com
Karen	Robinson	1616 East 55th St	
George	Rumsey	5433 S. Greenwood	gwrumsey@att.net
Ella	Saller	3541 N. Kostner	
Brenda	Sawyer	1225 East Hyde Park	bpsawyer@ameritech.net
Martha	Scott	5000 S. Cornell	
David	Shapiro	1700 East 56th, #2602	773-363-2155
Barbara	Smith	1616 East 55th St	
Bernadine	Whithurst	8037 S. LaSalle St	

Hyde Park Disabilities Task Force
"Walk and Roll" on 55th Street
Some Important Questions to Examine:

Curb Ramps

1. Is the curb ramp at least 36 inches wide (not including any flared sides)?
2. Does it have a reasonable slope? (Technical requirement is 8.33%. Also acceptable are 10% [e.g., 48 inches long with 6-inch rise] and 12.5% [24 inches long with 3-inch rise].)
3. Are transitions on and off the curb ramp flush and free of abrupt level changes?
4. Does the curb ramp have detectable warnings (bumps or domes)?
5. Is the sidewalk at the "top" of the curb ramp (the "landing") at least 36" wide?
6. If the curb ramp is built-up to the curb (a raised ramp from the street), is it outside the path of cars?
7. If the curb ramp is at a marked crossing, is it contained within the markings?

Sidewalks

1. A 60-inch sidewalk is generally considered adequate; are areas of your sidewalk narrower or obstructed to less than 32 inches? (32-inches is minimum passage width for wheelchairs; unobstructed 60 inches is recommended for a wheelchair to turn.)
2. Are there at least some areas on your sidewalk that are sufficiently wide to permit "passing space?" (Passing spaces should be included at intervals on narrow sidewalks—less than 60 inches—to allow wheelchair users to pass one another.)
3. Does your sidewalk have changes in level? Does it have any of these conditions:
 - a. Buckled brick
 - b. Cracks
 - c. Curbs without ramps
 - d. Drainage grates that protrude
 - e. Grooves in concrete
 - f. Heaving
 - g. Lips at curb ramps
 - h. Roots
 - i. Tree grates that aren't flush
 - j. Uneven transitions between streets, gutters, and ramps
4. Are there poorly aligned grate or gap openings in the sidewalk? (Grates with holes wider than 0.5 inches are unacceptable. Holes should be turned opposite to traffic.)
5. Are there obstacles or protruding objects that can make the sidewalk difficult for some users? Are there low awnings, benches, bike racks, café tables and chairs, landscaping, mailboxes, newspaper machines, parking meters, planters, light poles, bus shelters, or trees or shrubs that impede or interfere with safe pedestrian use of the sidewalk?