A Veteran independently using the new accessible boat launch at Seneca Landing Special Park, Poolesville, MD
INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................................................................................ 3

OVERVIEW................................................................................................................................................................. 3
MISSION STATEMENT ........................................................................................................................................................ 3
VISION STATEMENT .......................................................................................................................................................... 3
THE ACCESS TEAM MEMBERS ..................................................................................................................................... 3

NUMBERS AT A GLANCE..................................................................................................................................................... 4

REMOVING BARRIERS TO PLACES .................................................................................................................................. 5

SENeca LANDING SPECIAL PARK: A FULLY ACCESSIBLE FLOATING BOAT LAUNCH ................................................................. 5
SOUTH GERMANTOWN RECREATIONAL PARK MOOseum .................................................................................................. 5
BLACK HILL REGIONAL PARK SHELTER C .......................................................................................................................... 6
CAPITOL VIEW-HOMEWOOD LOCAL PARK .................................................................................................................... 6

REMOVING BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION .......................................................................................................................... 8

COVID-19 AND PROGRAM ACCESS IMPLICATIONS .......................................................................................................... 8
SUPPORT SERVICES................................................................................................................................................................ 8
IDENTIFIED DISABILITIES IN PARK PROGRAMS ............................................................................................................... 8
EDUCATION AND TRAINING ............................................................................................................................................. 8

ADDITIONAL HIGHLIGHTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS ........................................................................................................ 9

ACCESS ON WHEELS.......................................................................................................................................................... 9
INCLUSIVE SPECIAL EVENTS ........................................................................................................................................ 10

ACCESS TEAM THROUGH THE YEARS ............................................................................................................................ 11
INTRODUCTION

Overview
The Access Team consists of eight professionals from five divisions across Montgomery Parks and Montgomery Planning. This report highlights the accomplishments of this team for Fiscal Year 2020.

Mission Statement
The Montgomery County Department of Parks and the Planning Department are committed to uphold the integrity of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) by delivering reasonable services, modifications, and physical accessibility as we strive to ensure social equity and inclusion of all citizens.

Vision Statement
Individuals will be afforded respect and dignity while engaging in leisure pursuits to enhance their quality of life in a clean, safe and accessible setting.

The Access Team Members
Jennene Blakely, Inclusion & Community Outreach Specialist, Parks
Marybeth Dugan, Program Access Coordinator, Parks
Bob Green, Senior ADA Compliance Project Manager, Parks
Wen Huang, ADA Project Manager, Parks
Genevieve Jennai, Program Access Specialist, Parks
Christine McGrew, Special Projects and Policy Manager, Planning
Mike Moxley, ADA Facilities Supervisor, Parks
Kristi Williams, PACP Division Chief, Parks
NUMBERS AT A GLANCE

• 33 projects completed, in design or under construction in FY20 to specifically address physical accessibility barriers while an additional 22 park improvement projects include ADA compliance updates.

• 126 career employees participated in trainings offered by the Program Access Staff in FY20

• 106 direct support services were coordinated for patrons with disabilities in Park programs between July 2019 and March 2020

• 2400+ barrier removals since 2015

• $1.8 million funded annually to support physical ADA compliance (level funding from FY19)

TESTIMONIALS

“The ADA work that you did at the Tilden Local Park looks great! We particularly appreciate the sidewalks separating pedestrians from vehicles, the leveling of the entrance to the recreation building and the new playground equipment, including the new basketball court and hoops. Thanks again for all of your work on behalf of the community.”

-Edward Rich, President, Greater Farmland Civic Association

“Please accept our belated thanks for the care package you sent! It was like Christmas in summer!! They are still enjoying the gifts. We are on a virtual Montgomery Parks camp this week, and both my boys were using some of the fidgets you sent... it provides times of pleasure and laughter.”

-Pleased parent praising the sensory sacks sent to summer camp participants

“It used to take me 25 minutes to get in water there and I had to use crutches. It took me less than one minute to access water since the new floating boat launch was installed. I teared up when I saw it. It works great and I love it.”

-Rob Hunter, US Navy Veteran with 25 years of service in the Global War on Terrorism including Joint Special Operation Task Force and Operation Enduring Freedom, delighted with the new accessible boat launch at Seneca Landing Special Park
REMOVING BARRIERS TO PLACES

Seneca Landing Special Park: A Fully Accessible Floating Boat Launch

Before the Physical Access improvement projects, non-motorized boaters with physical disabilities had to utilize a steep ramp or request the assistance of volunteers to get their boat in the water. The improvements provide a fully accessible floating kayak/canoe launch, gangway and drop-off area. The launch area, located upstream of the existing boat ramp, offers a fully accessible picnic area, interpretative panels of the Seneca Creek, and compliant parking. The second phase of the project will provide accessibility upgrades to the existing boat ramp utilizing funds from a grant from the State of Maryland.

South Germantown Recreational Park MOOseum

The MOOseum is a dairy heritage museum that will soon be fully accessible. In the spring of 2020, exterior renovations were completed to include accessibility and drainage improvements. The improvements include compliant parking spaces, a ramp to the main entrance, and a looped walkway that connects the MOOseum entrances to the affiliated restroom and children’s playroom. New accessible directional signs were also installed throughout the site. Future interior renovations will be completed by our Facilities Management Division under the direction of the Physical Access Team.
Black Hill Regional Park Shelter C

Phase one reconstruction of Black Hill Regional Park, included an improvement and expansion renovation of Shelter C. It was led by the Facilities Management Division, in conjunction with the Park Development Division and the Physical Access Team. The upgrades increase the shelter size to better serve park patrons and is now the largest in the park. The upgraded shelter has 4 grills, 2 of which are ADA compliant, a performance pad, new concrete walkway with gentle slopes, accessible parking spaces and aisles, electrical service and new drainage.

Capitol View-Homewood Local Park

Improvements at the park included substantive accessibility upgrades: a complete parking lot renovation, storm water management retrofits, drainage and safety repairs, lighting upgrades, and furniture. A newly improved ramp, walkway and parking area, provides access to amenities including the playground, 2 softball fields, a basketball court, access to the activity building, new benches, grills and a drinking fountain. This project was a joint effort by Park Development staff, the Access Team, and Facilities Management.

Additional Park Accessibility Improvements Include:

Chase Avenue Urban Park and Cheltenham Drive Urban Park (Fully Accessible Parks): Minor park renovations to provide accessible surfaces, remove old features and appurtenances, install new benches, flexible seating and tables.

Darnestown Local Park (85% Complete): Accessible parking, renovated walkways and access to the basketball and tennis courts, shelter, playground, and soccer field.

Drinking fountain replacements/upgrades at Ridge Road Regional Park, Glenmont Local Park, Veirs Mill Local Park, and Capitol View-Homewood Local Park.

Fleming Local Park: Improved access to the shelter, playground, basketball, tennis courts, and softball field. New addition of push button light controls for both court activities and walkway lighting
Interior Park Activity renovations were completed at Pinecrest, Wheaton-Claridge, and Veirs Mill Local Parks.

Moyer Road Local Park: Parking lot upgrades, sidewalk removal/replacement to allow access to the playground, basketball and tennis courts, and picnic shelter.


Tilden Woods Local Park: New walkways to the basketball and tennis courts, playground, and soccer field, addition of a sidewalk connection to the neighborhood was part of the parking lot renovation as well as enhanced stormwater management, new tables and benches were provide in various locations to serve park patrons.
REMOVING BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

COVID-19 and Program Access Implications

Montgomery Parks remains vigilant in the many measures it is taking to ensure the safety of our park patrons and employees. In March 2020, when indoor facilities and other amenities closed to the public, many Parks staff adapted their work programs. The Program Access Office employees made appropriate modifications including:

- Updating and reorganizing all training manuals including adding COVID-19 safety protocols.
- Restructuring in-person educational trainings and onboarding orientation to virtual trainings.
- Keeping constant open communication with staff.
- Developing and distributing “Sensory Sacks” to day camp participants who were registered to receive support services during face to face camp programs that were cancelled. Each sack contained a variety of sensory gadgets and a “recipe” book filled with engaging activities for all to enjoy! Parents/guardians were especially grateful for this “sack of goodies” as it helped their children achieve success as they participated in virtual camps and programs.

Support Services

The Office provided support services until mid-March with the onset of the pandemic and the cancellation of programs and temporary closing of indoor facilities:

- Direct services* were coordinated for 106 park participants.
- A total of 123 participants benefitted from direct and indirect services*.

*Direct services refer to those services which are coordinated by Program Access Office staff for a program participant with a disability. Indirect services refer to modifications made by facility staff/instructors regarding program methods, environment or structure changes, or general assistance to the patron with a disability.

Identified Disabilities in Park Programs

- 2% Physical Disabilities
- 2% Developmental Disabilities
- 3% Attention Deficit Disorder
- 4% Blind/Low Vision
- 9% Consult Requests / Unknown
- 10% Emotional/Behavioral Disabilities
- 13% Multiple Disabilities
- 23% Deaf/Hard of Hearing
- 34% Autism Spectrum Disorder

Education and Training

Career employees engaged in diverse trainings including:

- Program Access Office Operations and the ADA: 102 participants
- Total Communication: 11 participants
- NEW! Toolbox Training: Preventative Behavior Management Strategies: 13 participants

Seasonal employees participated in various trainings including:

- Customer Service and the ADA: 4 participants
- Comprehensive Support Staff Training*: 13 participants

*This training is designed specifically for support staff who work directly with participants with disabilities in programs, classes and activities. The curriculum includes 5 comprehensive educational training modules.
ADDITIONAL HIGHLIGHTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Access on Wheels

Montgomery Parks procured adaptive equipment for programs and temporary events to ensure access and inclusion. The equipment is safely stored in a secured trailer appropriately named Access on Wheels and is transported to the event site where equipment is properly installed to provide access (mobility mats, temporary ramps, etc.). While at the event, the trailer is placed in an area where participants can easily obtain wheelchairs, walkers, ALDs, etc. to use while enjoying the event, at no cost to the guest.

A user-friendly resource manual was also developed for the event management team to follow to enhance accessibility so everyone can enjoy event festivities.

For park patrons requiring assistance, M-NCPPC, Montgomery Parks has the following items available:
- Wheelchairs
- Assistive Listening Device
- Walkers
- Water and bowl for service animals

Equipment is available on a first-come, first-served basis.
- Use at your own risk.
- Accessible equipment may not be removed from the event site for any reason.
- Wheelchair maximum weight is 450 pounds and is not designed to hold more than one person.
- In the event of severe weather, staff reserve the right to retain equipment for safety reasons.
Montgomery Parks partnered with Montgomery Recreation to celebrate the 30th Anniversary of the American's with Disabilities Act. Over 466 families participated in the event which included sensitivity awareness activities that promoted disability awareness and acceptance; informative videos featuring the Eisenhaur Family on how the ADA impacts their lives (viewed 91 times), and a second video of Parks and Recreation employees and Planning Board members on what the ADA means to them (viewed 87 times). Montgomery County Councilmember, Will Jawando, read a heartwarming story about “Roxy the Raccoon”, a wheel-chair user, whose friends made small changes in their environment to make it an inclusive place for everyone—exactly what we strive to achieve in our Park system and in our everyday lives!

Other special events included the celebration of International Active Aging Week in October 2019. Adults 50+ celebrated Active Aging Week and “Walk Maryland Day” at Brookside Gardens. Attendees participated in Zumba, Yo-Chi and Forever Fitness, walks through the gardens with doctors from “Walk with a Doc”, and had the opportunity to visit 18 agencies that provide services for seniors from around the county! The event was offered by the Program Access Office in collaboration with Montgomery Health & Human Services, Montgomery Recreation, Montgomery County Public Library System and the Rockville Senior Center.

The annual Light It Up Blue: Autism Awareness and Acceptance Event scheduled for April 2020 was unfortunately cancelled due to the Coronavirus pandemic. In lieu of the event, Program Access staff coordinated and distributed helpful information, virtual family fun activities and interactive programs to educate, enhance awareness and acceptance of autism spectrum disorders for our Parks staff and partners. We look forward to hosting our “live” event next spring and hope to see you there!
ACCESS TEAM THROUGH THE YEARS

August 2011  Montgomery County, MD (including Montgomery Parks) entered into a Settlement Agreement with the United States Department of Justice (DOJ).

August 2012  The first ADA Compliance Project Manager was hired to oversee accessibility projects in the park system.

August 2012  Within the first year of the Settlement Agreement, four of 19 park barriers cited by the Department of Justice (DOJ) were remediated.

January 2013  The first ADA Training was held for all Parks employees, 700 staff participated over a two-day period.

November 2014  A second ADA Compliance Project Manager was hired to assist in accessibility projects

December 2014  Facilities Management Division created a career ADA Facilities Supervisor position to manage and uphold the integrity of the ADA throughout the park system.

February 2015  The Program Access Office was launched with the hiring of the Program Access Coordinator and the Program Access Specialist.

April 2015  The first seasonal support staff was hired to provide inclusion support for a participant with a disability.

June 2015  The Montgomery Parks and Planning Access Team was established and included employees from the Physical Access Team, Program Access Team, Planning Department and Public Affairs and Community Partnerships Division.

November 2015  ADA and Program Access Training became a mandatory requirement for all Parks employees.

August 2016  The Final Transition Plan was completed and submitted to the Department of Justice (DOJ).

September 2016  Implementation of the Final Transition Plan began, marking the long-term ADA barrier removal commitment by Montgomery Parks.

November 2016  The first fully accessible park, Greenbriar Local Park, opened to the public.

December 2016  1,000 Parks employees completed the mandatory ADA and Program Access Training which commenced in November 2015.

January 2017  The first PASSAGES newsletter, an internal overview of accessibility updates and inclusion efforts, was developed and distributed to all Parks employees.

March 2017  The first adaptive shuttle cart was purchased to transport guests who need assistance at Park events.

May 2017  The first ADA Spirit Awards were presented to 15 career staff celebrating their commitment to the ADA within their work programs.

September 2017  Renovations to Stratton Local Park, the last of the 19 mandated parks under the Settlement Agreement, was completed.
December 2017  In accordance with the Transition Plan, the 50th ADA compliance project was completed by the Physical Access Team

April 2018  The Program Access Office welcomed a third career staff to the team, the Inclusion and Community Outreach Specialist.

October 2018  Parks received the closeout letter from the Department of Justice (DOJ) indicating satisfaction with completion of conditions specified in the 2011 Settlement Agreement.

March 2019  Montgomery Parks launched the website search tool for accessible parks and amenities.

March 2019  Montgomery Parks permanently represented as ex-officio member on the Montgomery County Commission on People with Disabilities.

September 2019  The development of the “Access on Wheels”, a trailer of adaptive equipment for use at special events was introduced to Parks.

September 2019  The Physical Access team welcomed a fourth career staff, a Design Technician.

May 2020  In accordance with the Transition Plan, the 100th ADA renovation project by the Physical Access Team was completed.