

Recommendations of Accessibility Initiatives

**Submitted by the Accessibility Workgroup
and Endorsed by the Board of Trustees**

First Unitarian Congregational Society in Brooklyn

May 2, 2013

Accessibility

We call an “accessible congregation” one that acknowledges barriers to full participation of people with disabilities and makes a commitment to begin removing some of them.

An Accessible Congregation commits to three principles:

- Our congregation believes that all people, including people with disabilities, are valued as individuals, having inherent worth and dignity.
- Our congregation encourages people, with and without disabilities, to practice their faith and use their gifts in worship, service, study and leadership.
- Our congregation is making an effort to remove barriers of architecture, communications and attitudes that exclude people with disabilities from full and active participation.

Excerpted from “Perspectives on Disability: A Curriculum for Liberal Religious Adults” by Rev. Laurie Thomas, and quoted in “Accessibility Information for Unitarian Universalist Churches” by Dr. Charlotte Hawkins Shepard and Rev. Dr. Devorah Greenstein, 2010.

Accessibility Workgroup

In January 2013, the Board formed an Accessibility Workgroup to:

- assess the physical accessibility of spaces that are important to the community life of the First Unitarian Congregational Society of Brooklyn
- propose a comprehensive plan to improve accessibility over time
- recommend cost-effective actions that can be taken in the near term.

Core members of the Accessibility Workgroup have met many times since January 22 and gained information from congregants, disability advocates, contractors, and others. This report presents their recommendations and identifies research still underway. These initiatives were reviewed in an earlier form with the Facilities Management Committee. The Board of Trustees has endorsed these recommendations for approval by the Congregation at the Annual Meeting on May 19, and has authorized fund raising for Phase I. The Facilities Management Committee is engaging a church architect, and the Workgroup will work with the Committee and the architect on these initiatives.

The core members of the Accessibility Workgroup are:

Tom Check, Board rep and chair

Peter Norling

Bob Levine

Margaret Weber

The Accessibility Workgroup gratefully acknowledges important contributions from:

Paul Eisemann

David Thebus

Charlie King

Coco Wilde

Please send comments on these recommendations to accessibility@fuub.org, and vote for them at the Annual Meeting on Sunday, May 19, 2013. The meeting will begin at 12:30 and is expected to end at 2:30. Please stay for the vote, which is scheduled at the end of the meeting. Childcare will be provided.

Objective

The goal of this program is to enable individuals who are challenged by stairs, including individuals who use wheelchairs, to come into the following spaces that are important to congregational life at the First Unitarian Congregational Society in Brooklyn:

Sanctuary

Chapel

Undercroft

This program also addresses a solution for individuals with hearing impairments to participate fully in worship services and other events in the Chapel.

Recommendations

The Accessibility Workgroup recommends undertaking initiatives in three phases. The Board of Trustees has endorsed all three phases for review by the Congregation at the Annual Meeting on May 19.

Phase I:

Finalize cost estimates and engineering design for the following initiatives, and then implement them together in the late Spring and early Summer of 2013:

1. Center Handrail up Front Steps to Sanctuary
2. Hearing Coil Loop in Chapel
3. Accessible Unisex Family Rest Room in Undercroft

The total cost of Phase I is estimated as \$20,000 to \$25,000. The Board of Trustees has authorized fund raising for Phase I.

Recommendations (cont.)

Phase II:

More fully evaluate the feasibility, relative benefits, and costs of the following solutions to provide wheelchair users with access to the Undercroft and Sanctuary, and recommend a solution to the Board in the Fall of 2013:

4. Vertical Lift from Undercroft to Chapel to Sanctuary

-- or --

5.a. Inclined Wheelchair Lift from Pierrepont Street to Sanctuary, and

5.b. Inclined Wheelchair Lift between Chapel and Undercroft

-- or --

6.a. Ramp from Monroe Place to Front of Sanctuary, and

6.b. Ramp from Monroe Place to Undercroft

The cost of the recommended solution for Phase II may require fund raising during the 2013-2014 Congregational year or beyond, before implementation.

Phase III:

Perform further evaluation and cost estimation of the following initiatives, which could be undertaken in conjunction with other projects in the future:

7. Make Walkway to Chapel More Wheelchair-Accessible

8. Make Vestibule of Chapel More Wheelchair-Accessible

Phase I

Finalize cost estimates and engineering design for the following four initiatives, and then implement them together in the late Spring and early Summer of 2013:

1. Center Handrail up Front Steps to Sanctuary
2. Hearing Coil Loop in Chapel
3. Accessible Unisex Family Rest Room in Undercroft

The total cost of Phase I is estimated as \$20,000 to \$25,000. The Board of Trustees has authorized fund raising for Phase I.

1. Center Handrail up Front Steps to Sanctuary

Goal: Help someone who finds stairs challenging but doesn't use a wheelchair, enter the front of the Sanctuary from Pierrepont Street.

Action: Install a handrail on the stairs to the center door of the Sanctuary, which is the main route to enter and exit the Sanctuary.

Description: Many congregants, a few of whom use canes when walking on level surfaces, need a handrail when climbing steep steps. Many currently use the handrails at the sides of the center stairs, to go up to the main doors of the Sanctuary. A handrail up the center of these stairs would let them walk straight up to the main door. It would be similar to the handrails that run up the centers of the left stairs and the right stairs.

Cost:

- ☒ \$ 5,000 to \$ 10,000
- ☐ \$ 10,000 to \$ 25,000
- ☐ \$ 25,000 to \$ 50,000
- ☐ \$ 50,000 to \$ 100,000
- ☐ \$ 100,000 to \$ 150,000

Timing: Finish before Sep. 2013, the first Sanctuary service in the fall.

1. Finalize design and cost estimate.
2. Present to Landmarks for approval.
2. Install in summer 2013.

Other Impacts: If the steps are repaired over the summer, the handrail could be installed then. Or the handrail could be installed over the summer and re-installed when the steps are repaired.

Disadvantages: Requires approval by Landmarks because it is visible from outside the building.

2. Hearing Coil Loop in Chapel

Goal: Enable someone with hearing impairment to participate fully in worship and other events in the Chapel.

Action: Install a hearing coil loop in the Chapel.

Description: In 2011-2012, a very effective hearing coil loop was installed in the Sanctuary to transmit audio from the microphones directly to the hearing aids or headsets of individuals with impaired hearing, eliminating ambient noise and acoustic interference, at a cost of \$6,000. This initiative is to install the same solution in the Chapel, where the acoustics are very challenging for summer services and meetings.

Cost:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | \$ 5,000 to \$ 10,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | \$ 10,000 to \$ 25,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | \$ 25,000 to \$ 50,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | \$ 50,000 to \$ 100,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | \$ 100,000 to \$ 150,000 |

Timing: Install in the late spring or early summer 2013, for use during the 2013 summer services and thereafter.

Other Impacts: Should be accompanied by an education program to describe to people with hearing impairments how they can best take advantage of the hearing coil.

Disadvantages: None.

3. Accessible Unisex Family Rest Room in Undercroft

Goal: Enable someone who finds steps or uneven surfaces challenging, or uses a manual or motorized wheelchair, to use a unisex family rest room in the Undercroft.

Action: Convert the existing men's rest room in the Undercroft to an accessible unisex family rest room.

Description: Remove all plumbing fixtures from current rest room. Install an accessible toilet, grab bars, and sink. Widen door and swing it out instead of in, to create more space inside the rest room. Re-install wall-mounted diapering table. Rest room is then useful to families and anyone needing even floor surfaces or space to maneuver.

Cost:

- ☒ \$ 5,000 to \$ 10,000
- ☐ \$ 10,000 to \$ 25,000
- ☐ \$ 25,000 to \$ 50,000
- ☐ \$ 50,000 to \$ 100,000
- ☐ \$ 100,000 to \$ 150,000

Timing: Finish by September 2013.

1. Finalize design and cost estimates.
2. Construct in summer 2013.

Other Impacts: Consider removing pool table for better access to rest room. A unisex rest room is also more welcoming to transgender persons.

Disadvantages: None.

Phase II

More fully evaluate the feasibility, relative benefits, and costs of the following solutions to provide wheelchair users with access to the Undercroft and Sanctuary, and recommend a solution to the Board in the Fall of 2013:

4. Vertical Lift from Undercroft to Chapel to Sanctuary

-- or --

5.a. Inclined Wheelchair Lift from Pierrepont Street to Sanctuary, and

5.b. Inclined Wheelchair Lift between Chapel and Undercroft

-- or —

6.a. Ramp from Monroe Place to Front of Sanctuary, and

6.b. Ramp from Monroe Place to Undercroft

The cost of the recommended solution is expected to require fund raising during the 2013-2014 Congregational year or beyond, before implementation.

Currently Project 4 appears to be the most cost-effective solution, offering access to all three levels in one solution, unaffected by weather. But further evaluation is needed for a recommendation to the Board in the Fall of 2013.

4. Vertical Lift from Undercroft to Chapel to Sanctuary

Goal: Provide access to all three levels for someone who cannot use stairs, including a wheelchair user.

Action: Install a vertical lift rising from Undercroft to Chapel to Sanctuary.

Description: Install a vertical lift that opens in the current nursery in the Undercroft, in the back left area of the Chapel, and in the back right area of the Sanctuary.

A vertical lift is a platform riding up and down within a finished shaft. At each floor, the shaft has a door that swings out to open – into the Undercroft, Chapel or Sanctuary. A vertical lift requires less machinery and a smaller shaft than a traditional elevator.

Cost: *preliminary estimate*

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | \$ 5,000 to \$ 10,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | \$ 10,000 to \$ 25,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | \$ 25,000 to \$ 50,000 |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | \$ 50,000 to \$ 100,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | \$ 100,000 to \$ 150,000 |

Timing: Finish by September 2014.

1. Perform detailed engineering and finalize cost estimates.
2. Raise funds, apply for grants.
3. Construct in summer 2014 if funds have been raised by then.

Other Impacts: Remove pews to make space for wheelchairs in Sanctuary.

Does not require approval by Landmarks Preservation Commission because it is not visible from outside the building.

Disadvantages: Requires changes to the interior of the Sanctuary, in the back right corner.

Although hydraulic motor is quiet, may generate some noise in Sanctuary.

5.a. Inclined Wheelchair Lift from Pierrepont Street to Sanctuary

Goal: Enable someone who uses a manual or motorized wheelchair, to enter the Sanctuary from Pierrepont Street.

Action: Install a lift to run from the walkway to the Chapel, up the steps to the right-hand doors to the Sanctuary.

Description: Install an inclined wheelchair lift running from the Chapel walkway up the short flight of steps to the landing, then turning up the longer flight of steps to the right-hand doors to the Sanctuary. [Similar to lift at Kiddie Korner on Clinton between Remsen and Montague, but longer, and turning from the lower flight to the upper flight.]

Cost: *preliminary estimate*

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | \$ 5,000 to \$ 10,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | \$ 10,000 to \$ 25,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | \$ 25,000 to \$ 50,000 |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | \$ 50,000 to \$ 100,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | \$ 100,000 to \$ 150,000 |

Timing: Finish by September 2014.

1. Perform detailed engineering and finalize cost estimates.
2. Present to Landmarks for approval.
3. Raise funds, apply for grants.
4. Construct in spring/summer 2014.

Other Impacts: Remove pews to make space for wheelchairs in Sanctuary. Lift requires approval by Landmarks because it is visible from outside the building. Perform together with Project 5.b.

Disadvantages: The user would exit the Sanctuary via the right-hand doors, in an area congested by people lining up to descend the spiral staircase.

5.b. Inclined Wheelchair Lift between Chapel and Undercroft

Goal: Enable someone who uses a manual or motorized wheelchair, to travel between the Chapel and Undercroft.

Action: Install a lift to run up and down the steps in the small center passage between these two rooms.

Description: Install an inclined wheelchair lift running diagonally up and down the short flight of steps in the small room that connects the center of the Chapel with the center of the Undercroft. [Similar to lift at Kiddie Korner on Clinton between Remsen and Montague.] Widen the doorway from the small room to the Undercroft.

Cost: *preliminary estimate*

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | \$ 5,000 to \$ 10,000 |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | \$ 10,000 to \$ 25,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | \$ 25,000 to \$ 50,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | \$ 50,000 to \$ 100,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | \$ 100,000 to \$ 150,000 |

Timing: Finish by September 2014.

1. Finalize design and cost estimates.
2. Raise funds, apply for grants.
3. Construct in spring/summer 2014.

Other Impacts: Enables someone using a wheelchair to go from the Chapel to the accessible bathroom in the Undercroft.

Perform together with Project 5.a.

Disadvantages: When folded up and not in use, the lift occupies some of the width of the stairs, making them a little narrower to walk up or down. Ceiling may be too low for a lift here.

6.a. Ramp from Monroe Place to Front of Sanctuary

Goal: Enable someone who uses a manual or motorized wheelchair, to enter front of the Sanctuary from Monroe Pl.

Action: Install ramp from side of the church, on Monroe Pl., to front left doors to the Sanctuary on Pierrepont.

Description: Build a fully ADA-compliant ramp starting at the sidewalk on Monroe Place, rising via three “switchbacks” from the “alley” to the front left doors of the Sanctuary, where it would end in a landing (platform) over the current steps . Remove much of the garden. Build in a style and color consistent with the architecture.

Cost: *TBD*

- ☐ \$ 5,000 to \$ 10,000
- ☐ \$ 10,000 to \$ 25,000
- ☐ \$ 25,000 to \$ 50,000
- ☐ \$ 50,000 to \$ 100,000
- ☐ \$ 100,000 to \$ 150,000

Timing: Finish by September 2014.

1. Perform detailed engineering and finalize cost estimates.
2. Present to Landmarks for approval.
3. Raise funds, apply for grants.
4. Construct in spring/summer 2014.

Other Impacts: Remove pews to make space for wheelchairs in Sanctuary. Requires Landmarks approval because visible from outside the building; submit with ramp to Undercroft (Project 6.b.).

Disadvantages: Ramp will replace much of the garden on Monroe Place. More visible from street than interior vertical lift (Project 4) or exterior inclined lift (Project 5.a.).

6.b. Ramp from Monroe Place to Undercroft

Goal: Enable someone who uses a manual or motorized wheelchair, to enter the Undercroft from Monroe Place.

Action: Install a ramp from the side of the church, on Monroe Place, down to the side door of the Undercroft.

Description: Build a fully ADA-compliant ramp starting near the sidewalk on Monroe Place, from the 48 Monroe Pl. entrance down to the “alley”, then down to the side door of the Undercroft. Build an interior ramp from that door to floor of the Undercroft. Remove much of the garden between 48 Monroe Pl. entrance and the “alley”. Build exterior ramp in a style and color consistent with the architecture.

Cost: *TBD*

- ☐ \$ 5,000 to \$ 10,000
- ☐ \$ 10,000 to \$ 25,000
- ☐ \$ 25,000 to \$ 50,000
- ☐ \$ 50,000 to \$ 100,000
- ☐ \$ 100,000 to \$ 150,000

Timing: Finish by September 2014.

1. Perform detailed engineering and finalize cost estimates.
2. Present to Landmarks for approval.
3. Raise funds, apply for grants.
4. Construct in spring/summer 2014.

Other Impacts: Change door to Undercroft at foot of ramp to ADA emergency exit. Requires Landmarks approval because visible from outside the building; submit together with ramp to Sanctuary (Project 6.a.).

Disadvantages: Ramp will replace much of the garden on Monroe Place and will require relocating the wall that retains the garden, which Landmarks may consider a “permanent” change.

Phase III

Perform further evaluation and cost estimation of the following initiatives, which could be undertaken in conjunction with other projects in the future:

7. Make Walkway to Chapel More Wheelchair-Accessible
8. Make Vestibule of Chapel More Wheelchair-Accessible

7. Make Walkway to Chapel More Wheelchair-Accessible

Goal: Enable someone who uses a manual or motorized wheelchair, to easily enter the Chapel from Pierrepont Street.

Action: Create sloping sills at gate on Pierrepont Street and at door of the Chapel.

Description: Currently someone entering the Chapel in a wheelchair encounters two difficult bumps: at the gate on Pierrepont Street and at the door of the Chapel. The project is to cut these sills down at a gradual angle, replace them with sloping sills, or install short ramps to these sills.

Cost should be minor, but needs to be estimated.

Cost: TBD

- ☐ \$ 5,000 to \$ 10,000
- ☐ \$ 10,000 to \$ 25,000
- ☐ \$ 25,000 to \$ 50,000
- ☐ \$ 50,000 to \$ 100,000
- ☐ \$ 100,000 to \$ 150,000

Timing: Finish by September 2014.

1. Finalize design and cost estimates.
2. Include as part of another project, such as repairing the steps to the Sanctuary.

Other Impacts: If the steps to the Sanctuary are repaired either over the summer of 2013 or at a later time, the sills could be sloped then, or short ramps could be installed at any time.

Disadvantages: None.

8. Make Vestibule of Chapel More Wheelchair-Accessible

Goal: Enable someone who uses a manual or motorized wheelchair, to easily enter the Chapel from Pierrepont Street.

Action: If the foyer is reworked because of the removal of the Camp Screen, rebuild it to ADA standards.

Description: If the foyer is rebuilt after removal of the Camp Screen, it will be easier to navigate in a wheelchair if the foyer is at least 60" x 60", with doors at least 36" wide, which are the ADA specifications.

If there is a project to rebuild the foyer in the future, these costs should be estimated as part of that project.

Cost: TBD

- ☐ \$ 5,000 to \$ 10,000
- ☐ \$ 10,000 to \$ 25,000
- ☐ \$ 25,000 to \$ 50,000
- ☐ \$ 50,000 to \$ 100,000
- ☐ \$ 100,000 to \$ 150,000

Timing: Undertake if and when the foyer is reworked

Other Impacts: None.

Disadvantages: None.