

REALTIME TEXT FILE

DISABILITY COMMUNITY PLANNING GROUP WEBINAR

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Edited

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>> CLAUDIA FRIEDEL: All right, everyone. All right. Hello, everyone! My name is Claudia and I'm here to welcome you to our quarter 2 partner webinar for the Disability Community Planning Group for the Disability and Health Program.

A little housekeeping before we begin. We are recording this session and we do have ASL and CART/live captioning available. So, if you would like to view the captions, please click on the bottom, you should have a task bar that says, "closed captions." If you click on that bottom, on that button on the bottom of your screen, you would be able to view the captions. And you can also adjust the font size there as well; you should be able to.

And for those of you who would like to spotlight or pin or ASL interpreter, Jesse, please go to the participant list on the right-hand side of your screen and you can right click over Jesse's name, it just says Jesse and then in parenthesis "interpreter" and then you can click pin or spotlight. And once you do, you should be able to see him as the main box on your screen.

And we're going to be holding questions till the end. So, if you have any that pop up, feel free to type them into the chat or wait until the end and we'll have time to read questions or have folks unmute and ask at that time.

So now I am very happy to introduce our speaker today. Heidi Johnson-Wright is a native Ohioan who practiced government regulatory compliance law for ten years. She and her husband moved to South Florida in 2000 and she transitioned into ADA compliance work in 2001.

She was the City of Miami Beach's first full-time ADA coordinator until 2007, when she was hired by Miami-Dade County.

In her off time, she and her husband do freelance writing on inclusive designs in buildings and public spaces, as well as accessible travel.

Without further ado, we welcome Heidi, so take it away!

>> HEIDI JOHNSON-WRIGHT: Very good. Can everybody hear me okay? Is the sound good?

>> CLAUDIA FRIEDEL: Yes.

>> HEIDI JOHNSON-WRIGHT: Okay, super!

Well, it is my pleasure to be here today to talk to you about building a more inclusive

world.

You know, basically we're talking about making things not just disability accessible but for everyone to enjoy and appreciate.

So, go to the first/next slide, please.

And just by way of, you know, to let you know what I do with the county office, we're a civil rights-focused office and making sure that county's programs, services, and facilities are accessible to and useable by people with disabilities.

We are an internal compliance office. For example, the county has a Human Resources office department and they're not responsible for enforcing federal labor law, they're there to make sure the county's complying with law. And that's what our office is.

We're here to make sure that our ADA office is to make sure that the county is in compliance with that law in everything that we do.

Okay. Next slide.

So, for those of you that have, you know, I imagine some of you have a pretty good background on this, but let's just talk about basics. The ADA, again, a federal civil rights law, it was enforced by the Federal Government. It prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities.

And it is similar to the civil rights laws that were passed in this country back in the 1960's and those laws provided protection against discrimination for people on basis of race, gender, ethnicity.

And it wasn't until the 1990 that the ADA was passed, giving us protections for people with disabilities.

Okay. Next slide.

So, if you were to take the ADA, you know, it can be a complex law. There's a lot of case law, there are regulations that go with it, a lot of policies and so forth that go with the ADA.

But if you were to basically take it and just bring it down to three primary... um... factors, three primary goals, and that is equal opportunity to participate; equal opportunity to benefit; and getting those things in the most integrated setting possible.

So that applies to the parts of the ADA that concern county, local and state government, they also apply to Title III which deals with what are called public accommodations but those are really private businesses.

But today we are really going to be focusing more on Title II which concerns local and state government.

Okay. Next.

So, I have to put this in here, you're going to think this is irrelevant or nothing. Why is this in here, Heidi? Okay, this is Heidi's personal aside, okay.

I do talk to the University of Miami architecture students occasionally, doing, like, a guest lecture, and one of the things that I do when I develop this, is I always have this slide [laughs].

Basically, if you are not a wheelchair user, you may not know this.

Well, I have a wheelchair user that likes this. They're horrible for so many reasons!

[Laughs]. They break easy, they're notoriously unreliable and require help, and you can see this photo they retrofitted an existing building, maybe a mid-century office building and three steps they could have ramped those real easily and ramps just don't break, right?

And what I tell the students when I talk to them, I saw okay, take a look at this photo, okay, here's how the lift works, I would show up at the building and say oh, okay, here's the lift, I would get out of my power wheelchair, I would run up those stairs, I would grab that door, I would fling it up, I would run to the back where the building management

office is.

And the one guy that's on duty who is on a phone call with his girlfriend and I would have to wait, okay, for a while, and finally he would hang up the phone and I would say okay, hey, I need a key so I can make this lift work. Oh, you know what? It used to be that somebody else had it and they don't work here anymore. Let me go look.

And 20 minutes later, after he finds a key in the back of the office, he gives it to me. Wonderful. I take the key, I run down the hallway, I fling that door open, I run down those steps... [Sighs]... oh, now I can use the lift!

I guess that pretty much explains my viewpoint on lifts! [Laughs].

All right. Next slide, please.

So, an ADA fact. This is something that you may hear things, like, an existing structure, an existing building, and you may hear somebody say oh, you know what? This building is older, so it's grandfathered. In other words, we don't have to comply with ADA, you know, barrier removal requirements.

And there is no grandfathering under the ADA. Because the ADA is a civil rights law. It is not a building code; it is a civil rights law.

So, if we were to grandfather a provision of the ADA, that would be equivalent to when the -- after the civil rights laws in the '60s were passed and desegregation laws were passed, if there was a restaurant that had had a segregated lunch counter, if they said oh, well, we should be grandfathered and they would be told, you know what?

You have been violating people's civil rights for so long, you just keep going on and do it, keep on doing it. You shouldn't have to change, right? That would be preposterous and ridiculous, right? And that's the same thing as saying there is grandfathering under the ADA and there is none.

Okay. Next slide.

So, when I talk to the students, the architecture students, I really want to talk to many different groups of people. I do trainings for county departments and one of the things that I mention is the personal is political. If you're an older human being, you've heard this saying used, if it was political under the '60s and then the '70s feminist rights movement and so forth and basically saying that the personal experience that we have is always going to larger social and political structures.

So, you can't just say well, this is a political thing. It always has a bearing on people's lives in a direct way, in some direct way.

So, I want you to keep that thing in mind, okay.

And next slide, please.

So, let's talk a little bit about models of disability; in other words, how do we view people with disabilities and their place in society?

This is linked to ADA compliance and many aspects of disability rights. So, we're going to start here.

If you could advance to the next one.

Let's talk about the original model of disability. The way people in society used to view people with disabilities.

That's called the moral model. In other words, disability is a result of sin associated with guilt and shame and families would hide away their disabled family members, out of school and excluded from chance at meaningful role in society.

And disability was viewed as a dreadful thing and why would they be out in society anyway?

Okay. Next slide.

And so after we kind of evolved from that, it became sort of a medical model, all right, and that was in the 20th century with the start of more modern medicine and that the

excuse for sickness is to be cured and if the person can be cured, then their problems don't exist and society no longer that is a responsibility to make a place for them, okay. If they're not cured, then they're excused from society obligations, school, job, family. And when we say excused, we really mean excluded.

So, if either get yourself healed or go over there and sit in the corner of the room for the rest of your life.

Next model. Next is called rehab -- oh, wait, let me put in a couple points here. When we talk about medical model, you know, if you go back as the early 20th century, older adults with disabilities were minorities and over 47 years and if you had a spinal cord injury, you had a 10% chance of survival it.

And now people are living much longer lives with disabilities and nearly 80% of the population live after the age of 65 and people with disabilities are living much longer lives.

Okay. Next model. The next model is the rehab model. And the rehab model is a little bit like the medical model and basically, you know, if you ever read about people who had polio and went to rehabilitation facilities back in the mid-20th century, this is something you would hear a lot about.

And basically, it said that someone with a disability can get services by a professional, provide training, counseling, etc., and that will make up for their deficiency, right.

And that might be getting rehab exercise and so forth and getting a chair to get them wherever they need to go or wherever it might be.

So again, it's making up for a deficiency simply because that person is disabled. Okay.

And so the next model, the final, I hope, model, and I hope that we're getting more into that, is -- well, actually before we get to that one, let me point out, if you're a young person, this may not have as much of a -- and in fact, I will tell you, I grew up in the '70s and I remember 1975 and it wasn't really all that long ago.

And before '75, they had to get the education All Handicapped Children Act and this defines children with all disabilities and why is that?

This is getting kids not to attend a public school. If you were disabled, most of the time you couldn't get a public-school education. Just because you had a good education and get a good job and go on and take care of yourself.

Excluding somebody from that is like cutting somebody off at the knees from the start.

And, for example, in the '60s, wheelchair students had to sue the state of California to attend universities and we think of Berkeley as being a very liberal place. Back in the '60s, disability rights, you know, people didn't really know about it.

And when the first people, people with disabilities that were getting admitted into Berkeley actually started attending classes, there was a headline in the local paper, a helpless cripple attendance UC Berkeley classes. That was the headline.

Next slide, please.

This is the disability model and I hope that we are at this point now, basically disability is a normal aspect of life. It's another form of diversity.

And it comes out of the Disability Rights and Independent Living Movement. Disability does not mean defective, right, it means different.

And if a person with a disability is struggling to get employed and find housing, etc., it is due to inadequate services and attitudinal sensory and architectural barriers, that's a big one when I talk to architecture students and professionals.

Those are the models of disability. Hopefully we are evolving more.

And the disability model says that social discrimination is the most significant problem experienced by persons with disabilities and this is not only affecting people from the inside.

All right. Next slide, please.

So this is a great quote, I love this quote, and professor David Pfeiffer is a scholar and pretty school person and he deals with disability studies and a polio survivor and he says what is the normal way to be mobile over a distance of a mile? Is it to walk? Drive one's car? Take a taxi? Ride a bicycle? Use a wheelchair, roller skates, or use a skateboard? Is there only one or two right ways to be mobile? I think we can agree why is there only one or two ways of doing that, right? There should be multiple sways -- there should be multiple ways,

Next slide.

Ableism, when I talk to people, certainly young people, college students, who shouldn't pretty -- I think they are pretty progressively minded, but I say to them everybody in this room is familiar with the term racism or sexism, homophobia, anti-Semitism, etc., we're all familiar with those.

Is anybody familiar with the term ableism? And would you believe it or not, I may have several dozen people in the room and not one hand is raised about this particular word. Okay. So next slide.

And I tell them ableism is a real thing, it is a set of beliefs or practices that devalue and discriminate against people with disabilities. Often based on the assumption that disabled people need to be fixed in one form or another.

And disability is an error that must be overcome rather than a simple consequence of human diversity like race, ethnicity, gender.

Okay. Next slide.

In 2010, and the 2020 census is wrapping up, we don't have the statistics yet, but going back to the 2010 census, at that time it was estimated that approximately 56.7 million people in the United States had some form of disability. 57 million people, that's a big group of people out of 350 million people. That's pretty huge, right?

Okay. So next, next slide.

One of the other statistics is people are sometimes surprised by is that people with disabilities are almost three times as likely to live in poverty than any other group.

So, again, maybe having difficulties getting the education that they need, which leads to difficulties in getting employed, which means that being able to afford everything you need to have a life is very difficult, if not almost impossible.

Okay. So, next slide.

And limitations, again, this kind of goes back to what I said a few slides ago, comes from environments designed without the regard to the needs and rights of all.

I'm not talking about just physical environments, I'm talking really... um... our institutions and how we think and treat other people.

Okay. Next slide.

So for those of you that aren't familiar, a quick back -- by way of background and I'm bringing this up, supplemental security income is a benefit that's available by the Federal Government, it's a federal income to help aged, blind, and disabled people who have little or no income. And it's to meet basic needs like clothing and housing and they get a check a month and they basically pay for these absolute essential things.

Okay. Next thing/next slide.

And in 2016, there was some studies done and it says almost 5 million people on SSI. I literally think it's more than that, but that was the stat I found.

But regardless of that, in 13 states and in Washington, D.C., SSI benefits could not even cover the cost of the smallest apartment.

And the national average rent for a studio or efficiency unit equated to 99% of your entire typical SSI check of the month of \$763 dollars and that leaves the rest of the

check for your food, clothing, transportation, all of the other needs of your life, medical care, etc., assistance for personal care attendants and all of that sort of thing. You can imagine that's truly not a way to afford -- people can't even afford a basic place to live.

Okay. So next slide.

And so, what does it do? It basically creates homelessness and leads to often incarceration, people on the streets maybe being arrested.

People living in substandard housing, housing that they live in doesn't really meet their basic needs.

For example, I know that people who, say, live in a home and get, you know, all of a sudden they become disabled and left overnight, they have to use a wheelchair to get around and they find out that the doorway into their bathroom, the only doorway in their house is not wide enough to get a wheelchair through.

Even though they have a shower in the home and so forth, they have to take bed baths, they have to use a separate commode, they can't even use their own bathroom.

So again, that's sort of substandard housing.

Severe rent burdens for people.

And certainly institutionalization.

Okay. So next slide.

And so, this is a statistic for you to ponder and think about. Less than 1% of all housing units in the U.S. have the minimum level of access enabling the wheelchair user to move in without renovations. Less than 1%. To allow somebody to get the key to finally walk through the door and live there.

So, what I say to people is imagine the first time you went out looking for an apartment. You're ready to step up and go apartment hunting and you knew right off the bat that 99% of what was out there would not even -- you wouldn't even consider because it wasn't going to work for you.

How limiting would that be for just getting a place to live?

Okay. Next slide.

So, there are multi-year waiting lists for subsidized accessible housing that force the disabled to go into nursing homes.

Federal Government has no problem to coordinate affordable housing for people to get out of nursing homes.

And about one in seven people living in nursing homes is under the age of 65.

Imagine you have or know a person with a disability and there are no resources to live at home. And you don't have the resources to afford an accessible affordable apartment, and so you're 30 years of age and you live in a nursing home.

Now, imagine what it would take to even be able to get to a job interview if you lived in a nursing home? You go to bed when they put you to bed. You get up when they get you up. You get dressed when they dress you, they feed you when they feed you, they decide. How do you get up and get dressed and go to even a single job interview? It's going to be extremely, extremely difficult.

Which means how do you earn enough money to get out of that institutional setting?

Okay. Next slide.

American Association of Retired Persons did a survey not that long ago and did a study and said that 90% of retirees want to age in place.

But over a million disabled people over the age of 65 live in inaccessible homes.

And this is probably a thing where they're living in a house where they can't even really use the bathroom, all right?

More and more Baby Boomers retire every year. People are living longer with

disabilities and needing accessible homes, of course.

And so you have to ask the question, why is it that there are homes that, okay, say you buy your home in your 30s, you... um... you pay it off maybe by your 50s, and then maybe in your early 60s, you develop a disability and you can no longer go up the step to get to the only full bathroom in your house.

Why should you have to sell the home that you love, you've made a life in where you raised your children simply because you can no longer go up an entire flight of stairs? That's kind of mind-boggling when you think about it.

Okay. Next slide, please.

Another thing to ponder is that neither the Americans with Disabilities Act nor the Fair Housing Act require accessible features in single-family homes built by private developers.

67% of all housing units in the U.S. are single-family homes.

Again, we're talking about many, many housing units out there that if you're a wheelchair user, unless you have a significant amount saved where you can afford a lot of retrofitting, thousands of dollars of retrofitting to be done to a house, all of that is going to be completely out of your range; you're not going to be able to live there.

Okay. Next slide.

Visitability. This is another one of those terms I ask people when I'm training and I reach out to the room and I say how many people have heard the term visitability? Not visibility but visitability? And designers and students and such have not heard the term. It's an international movement to change home construction practices so that new homes offer some basic accessibility features.

It came about in the '80s from a group, a non-profit called Concrete Change out of the Atlanta area and I'll give you some great information online about Concrete Change. And visitability is grounded in social reform intent. It's not just about buildings, it's also about social reform.

Okay. Next slide.

So before we get into one of the basics of visitability, let's consider social isolation kills more people than obesity and it's just stigmatizing, because people end up being depressed and developing some other issue, because they're living in a place where they can't really get out. They can't get out to visit.

So, the term visitability, the term came about initially of how did somebody who, say, used a wheelchair accept an invitation to go to someone's home for dinner or a party or something when in all likelihood that person's house will have at least one step in the doorway and probably not an accessible bathroom on the first floor?

Myself, I use a powered chair. If I'm on my own, I can't accept, you know, invitations to people's homes for dinner parties. I just can't, you know.

Now, my husband is not disabled. What we have done in the past is I will switch to my manual lightweight chair, which I cannot push myself, my husband has to push me in that. It's not easy, but we can do it. We've done that.

Imagine you don't have the ability of living on your own and you have your own powered chair, what the heck are you going to do?

Okay. Next slide.

So, again, visitability, what are the basics? Well, it's standard -- its typical standard access features are at least one zero-step entrance accessible route from the driveway to the sidewalk.

All interior doors provide at least 32 inches of unobstructed passage width.

And at least one-half bathroom on the main floor for adaptable use.

And if you look at this home, it meets the requirements. And does it look like an ugly

institutionalized hospital to you? I'm guessing not. I think it looks like a beautiful home. So accessible does not have to mean ugly and institutional sick room kind of a thing; it can be beautiful, wonderful place.

Okay. Next slide.

So visitability law has been passed by a number of cities or counties in the U.S. not very many, but there are a few.

Pima County, Arizona, has one and it was challenged repeatedly by homebuilder organizations in court.

They lost against -- the homebuilders lost against what they brought against the county.

The city of Austin, Texas passed a visitability law back in 2014 and it is a pretty -- the visitability statutes that are out there, they vary a little bit from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, but they typically have the same three basics, which is: The door width, the one accessible entrance, and a bathroom on the first floor.

But the city of Austin visitability law has a 30-inch minimum wide door clearance for wheelchairs to go through.

Again, bathroom or half bath on the first floor.

Doors with lever handles.

Light switches that are mounted, if they're too high or too low, mounted at visible heights, at least on the first floor.

Next slide.

It creates a basic shell of access to permit formerly non-disabled people to remain in their homes. It benefits that group of people in particular, but it benefits very lay people, and as I mentioned a few minutes ago, what would you do if you were not disabled when you bought your home but became disabled later and it's tough to get in and so forth?

If you buy a home with these things, these basic features, and if you develop a disability later or what if you adopt a disabled child? Or what if you're hosting family members for the holidays and one of them is disabled, right?

So, it avoids expensive renovation and so much easier to provide these things when the house is built rather than afterwards.

It avoids people having to relocate to a different house and endangering their health and safety and moving to a nursing home, simply because you cannot go up a flight of stairs to go to the bathroom.

Okay. Next slide.

So here is another zero-step entrance. You can see the walkway goes up seamlessly to the porch into the front door.

Again, I really feel this is not an ugly hospital sort of looking thing.

It has been one of the things that people have resisted accessible homes because of this fear that if they do these things, it's going to look like this ugly old nursing home kind of place. And that's simply not true. That's what the homebuilders have been saying, oh my gosh, if we're putting this in our homes, no one is going to want to buy them.

What we see demographically, people want these homes, they want very much to stay in their home, and they want to be able to go visit friends and family.

Okay. Next slide.

Now let's talk about inclusive design, which is actually bigger and wider sort of a concept. And the heart of it is you have to make spaces more accessible because they are then usable, more useable by virtually anyone.

Okay. Even non-disabled.

So, let's go to the next slide.

So, let's talk about more of the micro here. Let's talk about products rather than -- for

the moment we won't talk about buildings, let's talk about smaller scale.

There are a lot of products that have incorporated inclusive design in them. You may not even think about it. Whoever sells door handles, it certainly helps make -- I had arthritis as a child, I'm in a wheelchair, I have trouble with my hands, this is easier to open than a doorknob or people carrying things in their arms, they have a toddler or pushing a stroller or whatever, and all you need is a lever handle.

Curb cuts benefit people in wheelchairs but also people in strollers, bikers, people on skates, people with roller bags, and etc.

The use of icons or symbols with text labels benefit people who speak other languages. And closed captioning on TV works for people who are hard of hearing, but it also is pretty cool when you've got a lot of background noise and you're trying to understand what's going on and understand and you put on the closed captioning and you can read what's being said.

Okay. Next slide.

So inclusive design, one of the things behind it is that it can be comfortably used by a diverse group of people who have different characteristics and different specification, including differences of age, gender, language ability, access to technology, time, and money.

And also, to be comfortably used by people living in different environments.

Okay. So, next.

All right. So why might people have limitations? Some are permanent. Myself, for me, you know, my joint damage that I have, my need to use a wheelchair is going to be a permanent thing.

But for some people there's temporary mobility issues.

If you've ever seen anybody with those carts and they have their knee bent in an L-shape up on the cart and they have the other foot with the weight on it, that's a temporary sort of thing.

Temporary use of a walker or a cane. Or it could be situational.

For example, if somebody may be permanently blind but they may temporarily have cataracts that can be addressed later or they're looking at a phone or map and they have a glare and can't see at that particular moment.

People are particularly non-verbal, some people just have laryngitis or can't speak a particular language.

People may be permanently Deaf, or they may have an ear infection affecting their hearing or can't understand the language spoken around them.

There might be all kinds of ways why they have limitations on a situation which occurs.

Next slide, please.

Inclusive design benefits more than people with permanent disabilities. You have this lady with the one arm that's permanent. You have a person who has one leg, or you have someone with an arm or leg injury or situationally they're multitasking with a toddler up in one arm or they're in a confined space and can't walk around very well.

Next slide.

So, who benefits from smooth walkways? Immediately we think of people who are chair users but there are people who use strollers or bicycles, skateboards, again, roller bags, all of those type of things.

Next slide.

So, I like this quote. It wasn't just the wheelchair user who benefitted all of those who roll. All of those who roll also benefit, patients with push chairs, scooters, delivery drivers, trollies, they all found advantages in curb cuts.

I don't know how many of you are familiar with Ed Roberts, he is one of those people

that sued the State of California to go to UC Berkeley back in the '60s. He had polio and he was a wheelchair user and he, after -- well, during his time in school, but even afterwards, he was one of the founders of the very first independent living centers in the United States. Now they're throughout the country, but they formed the first one. And one of those -- one of their goals was to get just the local city of Berkeley and then broadly to put in curb cuts.

And people at that time would say to him well, there are no disabled people out there, why do we need them? Well, the reason you don't see them, they don't exist, how can you do that, how can they go out if there's a big curb set?

So, people often object to these changes because they think they're only for a teeny tiny group of the population when really these things benefit many, many people.

Okay. Next slide.

Accessible beach matting. I don't know if you've seen that, it's installed, you know, for wheelchair uses. It's put in, it's pretty secure, it can be rolled back up again if needed, if you need to get it off of the sand because of an oncoming storm or something like that. You can see you have this disability feature, this man in a wheelchair on the left and a young lady in a power scooter on the right and they're both on the matting; otherwise they would get stuck in the sand.

Okay. Next slide, please.

Now, here are photos of beaches that have the matting. There are no signs up that say thou shall walk over the matting and not on the sand.

What happens is people see the matting, it's cool to the touch for their feet, it allows them to have their rollable -- their coolers on wheels, their strollers. And so, people are using it without even being told. They often use those things too.

I am working at home, most people have during the pandemic, but normally my office building is in a large office tower and the entrance is on the one side and there is one of those automatic doors like you see at grocery stores.

But there's also just standard doors that you have to physically open. And they're unlocked, just like -- just like the power door is, but let me tell you [laughs], it is extremely rare for people with disabilities to not use anything but the power door. I mean... people are automatically drawn to this level of convenience that benefits everybody.

Okay. So, next slide.

Who benefits from one hand design? Again, we talked about that. One arm might be permanent, temporary arm injury, or a parent always carrying your little kid around with you. Okay.

Next slide.

Subtitles with captioning. If someone is hard of hearing. Somebody who is reading in an airport and there's a lot of noise and so forth. Or teaching a child to read.

I, um, I am an Ohioan as Claudia mentioned but I studied Spanish for a number of years, but unfortunately I don't have much chance to use it and when my husband and I moved here 20 years ago down to Miami, I worked really hard to try to get my Spanish skills back.

And we both went to a class for adults in a high school and so forth, but I also found that I put on the captions on the TV, particularly in present day, the way that people speak in present day, I put the captioning on, the closed captioning, I should say, and to hear somebody speak the words and see it on the screen, I cannot tell you how much I benefitted for that.

When you have the audible mixed with the visual, it is an incredibly powerful tool. And, again, teaching kids to read, it's exactly like that.

Okay. Next slide.

How about intuitive design, right? You might have a visual issue from birth and it's going to be better if some place is designed intuitively and being in a safe way and someone working together in some way, shape, or form.

Okay. Next.

Okay. Now, I have to do a little aside, just like I have the thing with the lift, you will hear people, if you are not disabled yourself, and especially if you're not a wheelchair user yourself, you will sometimes hear people say and I hear architects say this, and I find it disturbing, and they say: We don't have to design anything other than to the minimums that the building code requires, because those people using wheelchairs have these special fancy new wheelchairs that will take them up and downstairs. We don't have to worry about the incline inclusively. Well, that's just garbage! [Laughs].

And next slide.

And the reason why these "magic chairs" are not going to solve the problem or allow us to design, continuing to design without access.

Next slide, please.

Is that number one, they're extremely expensive, they're probably \$120,000.

I know with my provider, which is great, I have a wonderful insurance company, I'm not disrespecting them at all, but I have to really justify when I need a chair. And they are very particular about the cost and everything.

They had never, ever, ever fund \$120,000 chair.

They are very expensive to get repaired.

And the only -- especially if you use them in a high demand sort of thing, up a flight of stairs, they require a lot of power. And you have to charge them, like, very soon after you use them.

They're just not useable. They're just not... um... realistic.

And it also is really rather kind of arrogant, I think, to say we don't have to design the environment for everybody, because those people....

It's kind of going back to this, they're going back to their medical model or their rehab model and get those people, they can get healed or they can get fixed. And if they can, they can come down and play in the deep end with us. And if they can't, let them go swim in the shallow end of the pool, right?

Very, very sort of segregating sort of attitude.

Okay. Next slide.

And so, this is -- this addresses what I said a minute ago. Very expensive, etc.

Yes, go ahead to the next one.

Magic suits. You'll hear about this one for people with spinal cord injuries. We don't have to design this inclusively; people will have magic suits so they can walk.

That is so arrogant, again, segregating and it's dreadful to talk like that.

Let's go to the next slide and let me explain.

These suits, they do exist. The point of them really is to get people up on their legs for medical reasons, because if you have to sit in a chair for a long time, you can get pressure sores, you have issues with blood circulation, you have issues with the bones decalcifying because you're not putting any weight on them.

And that's what these suits were designed for, in a sense of almost like a physical therapy sort of a way.

They cost upwards of \$500,000, insurance almost never covers them. They can weigh up to 50 pounds to put on. They have a battery that lasts maybe 8 hours and they require crutches, and that person has to have excellent arms, control, and strength which a quadriplegic person can't do and require up to 70 training sessions.

And they're not intended to allow the user to walk as they did pre-injury. So please, if you hear people talking about these things, the ADA grandfathering, they say they don't have to design more inclusively because people can use these chairs, you tell them baloney [laughs].

Accessible design, it doesn't have to be ugly.

Next slide.

I don't want to take up too much of your time and we'll bang through this really quick. Here's a kitchen, this lady has a kitchen designed accessibly, and she has heating units and range. Does that look like a hospital? I hope not. I think it looks pretty cool.

Here's another one, next slide, you cannot tell me this is an ugly kitchen, that looks like something that's really cool from the 21st century. I love that! That's wonderful.

Next slide.

Inclusive kitchen features you can have more of a, quote-unquote, conventional kitchen, like a cooktop, a raised outlet, dishwasher, wider doorways that people can remain in their homes and yet cook their meals.

Okay. Next slide.

Multi-height counters, basic refrigerator doors, sinks, chopping blocks. Universal design kitchens are really cool.

Next slide.

And this one, I can stand up and take a few steps, I load and unload my dishwasher, although my husband is very, very helpful, this is a raised dishwasher. Oh, how I wish I had one of those! Look at that! It's cool! That's wonderful.

Okay. Bathroom. Often a sticking point so many times. Look at this space-age design, full inclusive bathroom, I think that is so cool!

Both the shower chair and sinks are on tanks and you can raise and move them, the toilet, sink, you can raise and move, part of the structure so that everybody is included.

Next slide.

Okay. So, we're going to talk, this is what we call the ADA sink, okay. I hate this sink! [Laughs]. Technically yes, it is compliant under the law. But it is ugly!

And the thing is when you are like me, I don't have long arms, a lot of women and children don't have long arms, you need arms like LeBron to stand or sit in front of the sink and reach the faucet. It's crazy!

And it's really, really shallow and a lot of times -- it's just a mess, okay.

They comply, but let's try to avoid these kind of icky institutional things.

Okay. Next slide.

I'll show you an accessible bath -- well, here's another sink. It's functional, but uninspired. You have the handles, they're good, but we can do better than that.

Next.

Side-to-side transfer, let me tell you, if you're ever involved in plans for renovations in bathrooms, allow space between the sink and the toilet that is big enough for somebody to back up their wheelchair in, because most wheelchair users want to do a side-to-side transfer from their chair onto the toilet and in order to do that, you have to have enough space to back the chair up to the wall. I just want to point that out.

Okay. Next. Next slide, please.

So, we'll talk a little bit more about bathrooms that are kind of cool.

Oh, I'm sorry -- if you go back just a wee bit. There, perfect, yeah. This is not the most beautiful thing, but let me tell you, if I checked into a hotel and I found out this was my shower in my hotel, I would be, like, thrilled! Thrilled beyond belief. It is an incredible shower and has the grab bars and things on the toilet. It is really, really cool.

But it is vanilla and looks institutional. Let's do better than that.

Next slide.

This sink was not designed to be accessible, but it is, and to me it is just an object of art. It is absolutely gorgeous! It is shallow, but in a bathroom, you're not washing dishes, you're just washing your hands.

Next slide.

Another one. Think if I had this, I would cry tears of joy. So beautiful and easy to get up to and gorgeous!

Next one, offset faucets, faucet handles in the very back, like what I call the institutional sink, harder to reach, farther away. Why can't we have faucets on the side, why do we have to do things exactly the way we used to do them?

Okay. Next slide.

Built-in shower seats, gorgeous! Beautiful showers, accessible shower. I don't think anybody would say this is a hospital. I've never been in a hospital and it looks like that. I think it's amazing.

Next one. Minimal space, if you're familiar with things called wet rooms, you can see them in Europe, and it's an entire room that serves as the shower and the toilet.

I know that probably a lot of people have their hearts on getting around that, but you can actually make them accessible. So even something that's very minimalistic, European sort of minded can also work.

Okay. Next thing, next slide.

Roll-through shower, roll in shower is great, roll through shower may be even better and this was not designed for the disability acts, I found it online. The sinks I tell you were not designed for access. But the shower was just designed for anybody, and I LOVE that shower, it's beautiful!

Okay. Next slide.

Let's talk about some public spaces, now, we'll talk about structures. This is van cover, landmark, civic center, public plaza, courts, government offices, look at the ramping.

So I don't have to go to my sad little disability ramp over here on the side and the majority of the people are going up these steps, no, we can integrate and move these things together and design from an inclusive perspective.

Okay. Next slide.

Pioneer Courthouse in Portland, public living space, this is the city block downtown and integrated access into the steps.

Okay. Next slide.

Chicago Riverwalk, same thing, public walkway along the river, six blocks, across the bridge, it's wonderful!

Next slide.

And this is another one of the river. You can see the lady on the wheelchair, and you can see how she's integrated with the space along with everybody else.

Okay. Next slide.

Crown Fountain Millennium Park and this is a park and the people let them -- the people that run the park foundation said no, take it back to the drawing board [laughs] and they designed this wonderful public space, and you can tell the joy, look at their faces, and how cool it is, it is this pool, this wading pool, it's not that deep, anybody can work through it, it's an infinity edge, no steps.

Let's see the next slide.

You can see it, there's a video tower right there, is that cool or what?! [Laughs]. It's 100% accessible every area square inch of this park. Wonderful.

Okay. Next one.

And I think the next one is, yes, Squibb Bridge. Go to the next slide. It descends 400

feet and does it without one single step or one single mechanical lift and all done by gently graded walkways.

And next slide.

This is the view. You're over in Brooklyn Heights and go over it just like everybody else and don't deal with steps.

Next one, Indianapolis Cultural Trail, look, everybody, look who is using it, wheelers, bikers, we're all there together.

Next slide.

Eight-mile trail connects the downtown neighborhood and city market, bikes can be rented along there, there's public art, and parents can go with strollers, all in an integrated setting.

Okay. And our last slide. And this is a slide that I have on there, this photo is a still photo from a video by a performance artist who is a British performance artist and developed a disability in her 30s and she was stuck at home and felt like her life had collapsed around her because she was saying oh, god, don't use a wheelchair, you will be in a prison, oh god, and when she got a wheelchair, her life opened up and it was so much better.

And she was so happy. And to express this, she did this video where she is underwater and does a scuba dive in the chair and there's a beautiful setting around a rock and the fish.

I'm not showing you this as an adaptable scuba, but that's not what this is, this is performance art.

And her whole point is: If I don't have to contend with a built-in environment in a way that restricts me and underwater, if you go online, Google Sue, Susan Austin, on YouTube, she does 365 degrees upside down and she is not confined by barriers in any particular place.

I showed the architecture students this, at the end I show them, who gets to decide where people with disabilities live, work, and how to get around?

And I look at them and let them think about it for a second and I say to them, well, people with disabilities, of course, should have the first voice on this.

But it's not just people with disabilities. And I tell them, if you are going to go out in architecture and practice 35-40 years, in four decades, you will design hundreds or thousands of buildings. They may be single family homes, offices, parks, whatever you design, if you choose to design in a more inclusive fashion, you will have a profound, a profound effect on the lives of many, many people.

Not just people with disabilities, but people temporarily disabled and so forth.

So, I tell them, you know, I wasn't -- I tell them they're empowered. If you build inclusively, if you design inclusively, you give this gift of freedom, for people to live, places to work, etc., simply by designing in a more inclusive way. It doesn't have to look ugly and it can benefit virtually anyone [laughs].

All right. So that is my presentation!

And, hey, any kind of questions that you have?

>> CLAUDIA FRIEDEL: All right. Thank you so much, Heidi. That was wonderful!

I really love -- this is my second time hearing her talk and I think it's just the best.

>> HEIDI JOHNSON-WRIGHT: Oh, thank you.

>> CLAUDIA FRIEDEL: Does anyone have any questions? I know we have a minute or two. I'm going to check the chat.

>> HEIDI JOHNSON-WRIGHT: Yeah.

>> CLAUDIA FRIEDEL: Rebecca asks: Is Miami-Dade doing anything to promote the use of universal design for new housing?

>> HEIDI JOHNSON-WRIGHT: That's a great question. There is -- there are things being done. What I can tell you in specific is that we have an advisory board called the commission on disability -- Commission on Disability Issues or CODI and people are appointed by county commissioners to serve in a role as the voice of the disability community in the county.

One of the things they are taking up, one of the causes they are taking up now is exactly that issue.

And even though the county is doing some significant things, can't we always do better? I mean, shouldn't we always be striving to expel, you know, no matter how good we do? And I think there are so many opportunities that people don't even realize that can be made inclusively designed and can benefit so many people.

So, I guess I would say we are doing it, we are paying attention. But again, we should always be striving for better.

Oh, okay, I see one question, how would you propose balancing and preserving historical of significance? Even things that are designated with historic labels or recognition are still required to be accessible.

Depending on how it's designed, or a building is designed, obviously if it was built, you know, if it's in Boston in the 1700's or something, there will be limits to the footprint of that property.

But you have to at least make basic accessible features. And sometimes, you know, what they'll do is say okay, instead of the ramp being to a certain grade, you can make it one to ten or one to eight in a historical building when there's no other way of putting in a ramp.

The other way you may not be able to make one part accessible but still puts on you a requirement to make other parts of it accessible that can be done.

So, again, going back to the thing, there is such thing as grandfathering under the ADA. It's a federal civil rights law.

>> CLAUDIA FRIEDEL: And then I know one last question: Have you seen any examples of inclusive or universally designed parks or rec areas here in Florida?

>> HEIDI JOHNSON-WRIGHT: Wow... our park system, our county park system, and I know I see our ADA coordinator for parks, I think our park system is dynamite! I think they do amazing, amazing things, and, you know, every -- every feature that's in a park, whether it's a swimming pool, a playground, a picnic area or whatever, we, the county, makes a really, really big effort to make that for everybody.

So, it's not just you can park and go on part of a walkway and that's all you can do. No, every function that's in there or every use that's in that space, we work really hard in making that accessible.

So, I really think that Miami has a lot to be proud of.

And I'm sure there are other local places that say that too. I'm not saying they won't, but I live in Miami and they have a wonderfully accessible playground and they do super good with it.

I will say they need to have more.

I will say they need more accessible picnic areas, but the playground is wonderful.

>> CLAUDIA FRIEDEL: Thank you so much. We have one last comment from Mary which I'm sure everyone is thinking. Great job, Heidi, we loved your wonderful pictures and message.

>> HEIDI JOHNSON-WRIGHT: Oh, thank you!

>> CLAUDIA FRIEDEL: Thank you for coming.

>> HEIDI JOHNSON-WRIGHT: Claudia, please share my e-mail address. Everyone is welcome to contact me.

>> CLAUDIA FRIEDEL: We will do that when we send out the notes and the recording to all the partners.

We thank everyone for your time and thank you for presenting for us, we really appreciate your time, Heidi.

>> HEIDI JOHNSON-WRIGHT: Oh, it was a privilege. Thank you.

>> CLAUDIA FRIEDEL: Thank you all so much. You have a wonderful, wonderful rest of your week and happy Thanksgiving next week.

[Concludes at 3:04 p.m.]

**** Edited ****

Recommendations and Findings:

- The ADA is a federal civil law that prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities.
- Disability is a normal aspect of life and another form of diversity.
- Making spaces accessible benefits people with disabilities and people without disabilities alike. (E.g. automatic doors make spaces accessible for: wheelchair users, parents carrying children, people with broken arms/acute injuries, people who have their hands full, etc.)
- Recommendations include listening to disabled voices about the appropriateness/usefulness of accommodations before putting them in place, keeping accessibility in mind during building planning rather than after a structure is already built, and ensuring places are accessible in order to promote the inclusion of everyone.