



# County of Santa Cruz

## BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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AGENDA: 5/22/01

May 9, 2001

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
County of Santa Cruz  
701 Ocean Street  
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

RE: ACCESSIBILITY TO COUNTY GOVERNMENT  
CENTER AND COURTHOUSE

Dear Members of the Board:

Attached is a letter from Robert Freiler, Chair of the County's Commission on Disabilities, identifying areas at the County Government Center and the Courts building where access for persons with disabilities should be improved. I would like to commend the Commission for their work in reviewing these issues and believe that every effort must be made to ensure accessibility to County facilities.

In order for the Board to be able to fully consider these issues, I recommend that the Board direct the County Administrative Officer, in consultation with the Director of General Services, to provide the Board with a report and recommendations during fiscal year 2001-02 budget hearings specifically addressing each area identified by the Commission where accessibility modifications are needed.

Sincerely,

TONY CAMPOS, Chairman  
Board of Supervisors

TC:ted

cc: Commission on Disabilities  
County Administrative Officer  
General Services Director  
Commissioner Pat Spence

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 COMMISSION ON DISABILITIES
 

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 COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ
 

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May 1, 2001

Chair Tony Campos  
 Board of Supervisors  
 701 Ocean Street  
 Santa Cruz, CA 95060

SUBJECT: Accessibility problems at the County Government Center and Courthouse

Dear Chair Campos:

The Commission on Disabilities urges the Board to allocate funding for the next fiscal year to provide accessibility modifications to the County facilities discussed in the General Services Director's letter enclosed with this letter.

The Commission has been working with Mr. Watson during the past several months in defining the access problems and exploring possible solutions. The following is a brief description of the areas of concern.

- Restrooms in the Main Courthouse are Not Accessible

The public restrooms on the Ocean Street side of the main courthouse are not accessible to persons with disabilities. The public restrooms on the opposite side of the courthouse are accessible but are approximately 250 feet farther away from those on the Ocean Street side. This means that jurors or visitors with disabilities frequenting the courtrooms on the Ocean Street side of the courthouse must travel a substantial distance more than non-disabled persons do in order to use a rest room.

- Jury Assembly Room Path of Travel to Restrooms and Courtrooms are Not Accessible

The jury assembly room is a separate building located behind the Government Center. It does not have any restrooms nor does it provide an accessible route to the main building or the Courthouse that is reasonable for persons with disabilities. Non-disabled persons can reach the main building and the Courthouse by way of a flight of stairs between the jury assembly building and the Government Center building. When potential jurors with disabilities wish to go to a restroom or to a courtroom and are unable walk up the stairs, they must use the basement entrance at the south end of the Government Center. This is a circuitous route, requiring them to walk or push their wheelchair more than 653 feet (sometimes in the rain) down the vehicle roadway (there is no walkway thereby creating hazard) behind the jury assembly building and around the south end of the building to the ramp into the basement.

If they are to report to an assigned courtroom, they must then take the elevator to the first floor, traverse the full length of the building and proceed through the atrium before they arrive at the Courthouse.

In addition to the excessive distance to travel, there is not an accessible means for emergency egress from the rear of the main buildings as required by California Building Code, Sections 1004.2.3.3, 1114B.1.2 and 1114B.2.1. This could present a serious hazard should there be a need to evacuate the building. The code requires two accessible exits and when the courthouse is closed there is only one accessible ramp for emergency egress available to persons with disabilities located at the far southeast corner of the Government building.

Mr. Watson's letter indicates that an architect has prepared conceptual drawings to provide a ramp from the rear of the jury assembly building up to the first floor of the Government building. It is our understanding that the architect's drawings indicate that this is indeed feasible and preliminary costs for implementation have been provided.

- Path of Travel from Accessible Parking Spaces to the Government Center is Dangerous

There are two accessible parking spaces located in the first row of parking across the southern part of the drive that runs on the east side of the Government Center. The typical path of travel for non-disabled pedestrians to access the building from the parking area is by way of a concrete walkway through a planting area, across the drive with a marked crosswalk, up the curb to the sidewalk and up a flight of stairs to the first floor entrance to the building.

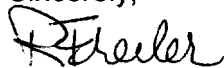
Persons with disabilities parked in an accessible space who cannot step up a curb, climb stairs, or are wheelchair users, must exit and travel south behind parked vehicles, turn west along the south end of the building, then cross the roadway, and proceed to the only ramped curb to the access ramp into the basement.

There is no marked crosswalk at that location, making it very dangerous because cars traveling south in front of the building do not expect anyone to cross at that location. This is made worse because trucks are frequently parked in the loading zone just before the curb ramp, blocking the view of a person crossing. If there were a curb ramp in front of the main entrance, a disabled person could cross there (as most non-disabled persons currently do) and traverse south on the sidewalk to the access ramp into the basement.

The Commission recommends that a curb ramp be installed in front of the stairs to the building entrance. This would allow persons with disabilities to utilize the same path of travel as non-disabled persons currently use to safely exit the parking lot and cross the drive.

Thank you for your consideration in this very important matter and for your continued support in making Santa Cruz County accessible to all people.

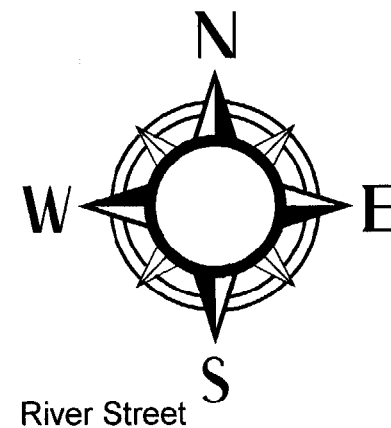
Sincerely,



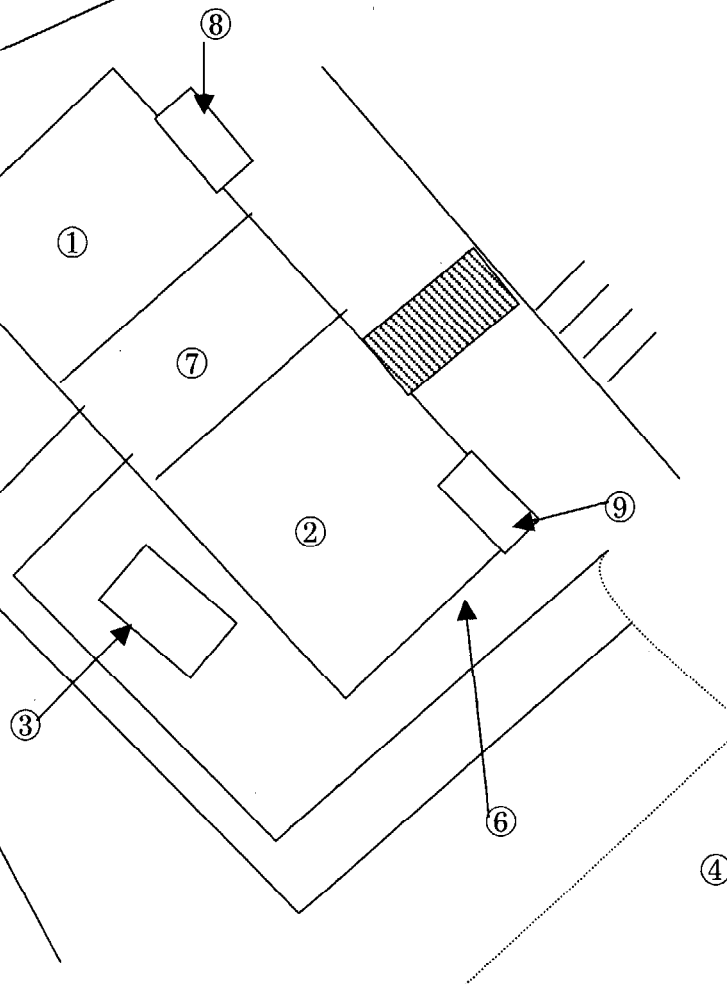
Robert Freiler, Chair  
Santa Cruz County Commission on Disabilities

ATTACHMENTS: Letter dated March 6, 2001 from Bob Watson, General Services Director, to Andrea Smith, Commission on Disabilities Coordinator

Water Street



Level



**Legend**

- ① Courtrooms
- ② 5-story gov't center
- ③ Jury assembly room
- ④ San Lorenzo Park
- ⑤ Sheriff's parking lot & roadway to rear of bldg
- ⑥ Supervisor's parking lot
- ⑦ Atrium/basement "well" area
- ⑧ Access ramp to courtrooms
- ⑨ Access ramp to basement

**interoffice**  
**MEMORANDUM****General Services Department**

**Date:** March 6, 2001

**To:** Andrea Smith, Disabilities Commission Coordinator

**From:** Bob Watson, General Services Director *BW*

**Subject:** ADA Projects

I have recently been discussing several potential plant projects with Jim Lewis of the Disabilities Commission. Mr. Lewis has asked that I summarize the status of these projects in writing. The following information is provided for your consideration.

- Restrooms in the Main Courthouse

Currently, the public restrooms on the Ocean Street side of the Main Courthouse are not accessible. The public restrooms on the river side of the Courthouse are accessible. This arrangement had been previously approved by the Disabilities Commission during the remodeling of the riverside restrooms. However, the General Services Department agrees that accessible restrooms on both sides of the building is preferable and we will be requesting that this project be included in the FY 2001-02 plant project budget.

- Accessibility Ramp - 701 Ocean Atrium Riverside Entrance/Exit

General Services has secured the services of Teal Messer Architect to develop conceptual drawings for an accessibility ramp at the riverside atrium entrance/exit to the Government Center. If this project proves feasible and cost effective, General Services will be requesting that this project be included in the FY 2001-02 plant project budget.

- Jury Assembly Room Restrooms

General Services staff have been involved in attempting to develop plans that would allow for the installation of an accessible, uni-sex restroom in the Jury Assembly Room. However, this has proved to be problematic due to the costs involved and the disruption that would be caused to the building's operations. As you are aware, it is difficult to justify a large investment of time and resources to this facility while the responsibility for Court facilities is discussed at the State level. The current plans for Court facilities does not include the long range usage of any

of the courtroom modular buildings. The County is hoping to proceed with replacement of the modular facilities once the issue of facility responsibility is finally decided this summer by the State. At this time, General Services prefers proceeding with the atrium ramp rather than a remodel of the Jury Assembly Room.

General Services Maintenance Division staff have been working with Ajita Patel of the Personnel Department in improving the ADA signage in the Main Courthouse and atrium in an effort to better direct those with disabilities who are reporting to the Courthouse for potential jury duty. It is also my understanding that the Courts have also included new language in their jury summons packages to also better direct and serve those with disabilities who are reporting for potential jury duty.

- Path of Access - Main Front Entrance to the Government Center

Mr. Lewis and I have had several discussions about the path of access to the main front entrance to the Government Center. There currently is no path of access marked from the parking lot to the accessibility ramp in the front of the building. We have discussed several ways of rectifying this, including adding a curb cut and/or ramp to the main entrance of the building. At this time, we are exploring securing the services of a traffic engineering firm to look at the overall layout of the parking lot at the Government Center. Included in this study would be the location of accessible parking spaces, paths of access to the building, and potential recommendations for a curb cut/ramp at the main entrance to the building. We will be requesting that funding for this study be included in the FY 2001-02 plant project budget.

In the interim, General Services Maintenance staff will be extending the red no parking zone at the entrance to the accessibility ramp at the front of the Government Center.

The General Services Department is also working on other ADA projects throughout the County facility system. Some of these projects include improved signage, construction of a new accessibility ramp entrance to the Main Jail scheduled for this spring, and remodeling of restrooms and other ADA improvements at the Watsonville Veterans Building.

cc: Nancy Carr Gordon, General Services  
Chris Hirsch, CAO  
Carol Girvetz, CAO  
Christine Patton, Superior Court